



THE POETS' SONG OF POETS



ANNA SHELDON CAMP SNEATH



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Book 56

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GEOFFREY CHAUCER

THE POETS' SONG OF POETS

Anna Sheldon Camp Sneath

*Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth!
Have ye souls in heaven too,
Double-lived in regions new?*

—JOHN KEATS



RICHARD G. BADGER

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TO MY HUSBAND

PREFACE

This book, as its title indicates, is a collection of poems in which the poets express their appreciation and estimate of their fellow poets. Except in a few instances, their attitude is eminently just, and this expression of their views constitutes a unique and important contribution to literary criticism. Poetry relating to English poets only is included in the collection. It is hoped that the book may prove interesting and serviceable to lovers of poets and their art.

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A. S. C. S.

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CONTENTS

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Of Poets and Poesy.....	15
Of English Verse.....	15
An Account of the Greatest English Poets.....	16
Inscription for a Statue of Chaucer at Woodstock....	16
The Progress of Envy.....	17
To Chaucer.....	17
Chaucer and Windsor.....	18
Written on the Blank Space of a Leaf at the end of Chaucer's tale of "The Flowre and the Life"....	19
Chaucer.....	19
A Dream of Fair Women.....	20
In Spring.....	20
The Poetry of Chaucer.....	21
On a Country Road.....	21

EDMUND SPENSER

Of Poets and Poesy.....	25
An Account of the Greatest English Poets.....	25
Ode to the King.....	26
The Prelude.....	26
The Lay of the Laureate.....	27
Sonnet.....	27
Spenser.....	28
The Poetry of Spenser.....	29

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

The Teares of the Muses.....	33
Of Poets and Poesy.....	33
To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author, Master William Shakespeare; and What He Hath Left Us	33
On Shakespeare.....	36
Prologue.....	36

The Progress of Poesy.....	37
Warwickshire.....	37
Inscriptions.....	39
Shakespeare.....	39
To Shakespeare.....	41
Shakespeare.....	42
The Names.....	42
Shakespeare.....	43
William Shakespeare.....	43
The Spirit of Shakespeare.....	47
The Poetry of Shakespeare.....	48
Stratford-on-Avon.....	48
William Shakespeare.....	49

BEN JONSON

Of Poets and Poesy.....	53
Prayer to Ben Jonson.....	53
An Ode for Ben Jonson.....	53
Upon Ben Jonson.....	54
Prologue.....	55
The Rosciad.....	56
Ben Jonson.....	56

JOHN MILTON

Under the Portrait of John Milton.....	59
On Master Milton's "Paradise Lost".....	59
An Account of the Greatest English Poets.....	61
The Seasons—Summer.....	62
The Progress of Poesy.....	62
Milton—In Youth.....	63
Milton—In Age.....	63
Sonnet.....	64
Fragment: Milton's Spirit.....	64
On a Lock of Milton's Hair.....	65
Milton.....	66
Milton.....	67
The Poetry of Milton.....	67
Milton.....	67
To Milton—Blind.....	68

JOHN DRYDEN

A Satire Against Wit.....	71
An Account of the Greatest English Poets.....	71
To Mr. Dryden.....	72
The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace.....	73
Marmion.....	73
The Village Curate.....	74
Dryden.....	74

ALEXANDER POPE

To Mr. Pope.....	79
On a Miscellany of Poems.....	79
The Wanderer.....	79
Lines to Alexander Pope.....	80
Table Talk.....	80
To Mr. Pope.....	81
Epistle to Mr. Alexander Pope.....	83

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

Jupiter and Mercury.....	89
The Streatham Portraits.....	89
Erin.....	90
Young and his Contemporaries.....	90
Goldsmith's Whistle.....	91

WILLIAM COWPER

In Memory of William Cowper, Esq.....	95
The Pursuits of Literature.....	95
The Harp, and Despair, of Cowper.....	95
Last Fruit off an Old Tree.....	96
Cowper's Grave.....	97
To Cowper.....	100

ROBERT BURNS

A Bard's Epitaph.....	105
At the Grave of Burns.....	106
Thoughts.....	108
Robert Burns.....	110

Written in Burns' Cottage.....	112
Robert Burns.....	112
Burns.....	114
For the Burns Centennial Celebration.....	118
To Burns' "Highland Mary"	120
Burns: An Ode.....	125

SIR WALTER SCOTT

To Sir Walter Scott.....	131
The Queen's Wake.....	131
On the Departure of Sir Walter Scott from Abbots- ford for Naples.....	132
Yarrow Revisited.....	132
English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.....	133
Introductions to Lays and Legends of Ancient Greece	134
The Scott Monument, Princess Street, Edinburgh..	134

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

To a Gentleman.....	137
To Wordsworth.....	140
The Last Fruit off an Old Tree.....	143
English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.....	143
To Wordsworth.....	144
To Wordsworth.....	144
To Wordsworth.....	145
Wordsworth.....	146
On a Portrait of Wordsworth by B. R. Haydon.....	147
After a Lecture on Wordsworth.....	147
Memorial Verses.....	151
William Wordsworth.....	152
The Poetry of Wordsworth.....	154
To Wordsworth.....	154
Wordsworth's Grave.....	154
To James Bromley.....	161

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

From the Prelude.....	165
English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.....	166
On Reading Coleridge's Epitaph Written by Himself	166

Coleridge.....	167
Samuel Taylor Coleridge.....	168
The Poetry of Coleridge.....	169
Coleridge at Chamouny.....	169
Coleridge.....	170
Lines in a Flyleaf of "Christabel"	171

ROBERT SOUTHEY

Inscription.....	175
On Southey's Birthday, November 4.....	175
To Southey.....	176
English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.....	178
To Robert Southey.....	179
The Poetry of Southey.....	180

LORD BYRON

Sonnet to Byron.....	183
Fragment: To Byron.....	183
Byron.....	183
Stanzas on the Death of Lord Byron.....	184
Lord Byron and the Armenian Convent.....	185
Memorial Verses.....	186
Byron.....	186
Byron's Grave.....	188
To Lord Byron.....	190
To Byron.....	194

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

After a Lecture on Shelley.....	197
Pauline.....	198
Ode to Shelley.....	200
Percy Bysshe Shelley.....	202
The Poetry of Shelley.....	203
Shelley.....	203
Shelley.....	203
To Shelley.....	204
Shelley's Centenary.....	204

JOHN KEATS

Fragment on Keats.....	211
Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats.....	211
Sonnet.....	216
Keats.....	216
After a Lecture on Keats.....	217
Aurora Leigh.....	218
To the Spirit of Keats.....	219
To the Memory of Keats.....	219
John Keats.....	220
The Poetry of Keats.....	220
An Inscription in Rome.....	221
Keats.....	221
Keats.....	222

ALFRED TENNYSON

To Alfred Tennyson.....	225
Wapentake.....	225
Alfred Tennyson.....	226
Tennyson.....	228
To Lord Tennyson.....	228
Tennyson.....	230
Alfred, Lord Tennyson.....	231
To Alfred Tennyson.....	232
Tennyson.....	232
In Memoriam—Alfred, Lord Tennyson.....	233
Tennyson.....	235
To Lord Tennyson.....	236
Lachrymae Musarum.....	236

ROBERT BROWNING

Robert Browning.....	243
Robert Browning.....	243
Robert Browning.....	244
A Sequence of Sonnets on the Death of Robert Brown- ing.....	244
Robert Browning: Chief Poet of the Age.....	247
The Burial of Robert Browning.....	248
The Twelfth of December.....	250

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Geoffrey Chaucer..... Frontispiece

TO FACE PAGE

Edmund Spenser.....	24
William Shakespeare.....	32
Ben Jonson.....	52
John Milton.....	58
John Dryden.....	70
Alexander Pope.....	78
Oliver Goldsmith.....	88
William Cowper.....	94
Robert Burns.....	104
Sir Walter Scott.....	130
William Wordsworth.....	136
Samuel Taylor Coleridge.....	164
Robert Southey.....	174
Lord Byron.....	182
Percy Bysshe Shelley.....	196
John Keats.....	210
Alfred Tennyson.....	224
Robert Browning.....	242

GEOFFREY CHAUCER
1340(?)—1400

(*From*)

OF POETS AND POESY

That noble Chaucer, in those former times,
The first enriched our English with his rhymes;
And was the first of ours, that ever brake
Into the Muses' treasure; and first spake
In weighty Numbers: delving in the mine
Of perfect knowledge, which he could refine
And coin for current; and as much as then
The English language could express to men,
He made it do! and, by his wondrous skill,
Gave us much light from his abundant quill.

—MICHAEL DRAYTON

(*From*)

OF ENGLISH VERSE

Chaucer, his sense can only boast;
The glory of his numbers lost!
Years have defaced his matchless strain;
And yet he did not sing in vain!

The beauties which adorned that age,
The shining subjects of his rage,
Hoping they should immortal prove
Rewarded with success his love.

This was the gen'rous poet's scope;
And all an English pen can hope,
To make the fair approve his flame,
That can so far extend their fame!

Verse, thus design'd, has no ill fate,
If it arrive but at the date
Of fading beauty; if it prove
But as long-lived as present Love.

—EDMUND WALLER

(*From*)

AN ACCOUNT OF
THE GREATEST ENGLISH POETS

Long had our dull forefathers slept supine,
Nor felt the raptures of the tuneful Nine;
'Till Chaucer first, a merry bard, arose,
And many a story told in rhyme and prose.
But age has rusted what the poet writ,
Worn out his language, and obscur'd his wit:
In vain he jests in his unpolish'd strain,
And tries to make his readers laugh in vain.

—JOSEPH ADDISON

(*From*)

INSCRIPTION FOR A STATUE OF CHAUCER
AT WOODSTOCK

Such was old Chaucer; such the placid mien
Of him who first with harmony inform'd
The language of our fathers. Here he dwelt
For many a cheerful day. These ancient walls
Have often heard him, while his legends blithe
He sang; of love, or knighthood, or the wiles
Of homely life: through each estate and age,
The fashions and the follies of the world
With cunning hand portraying. Though perchance
From Blenheim's towers, O stranger, thou art come
Glowing with Churchill's trophies; yet in vain
Dost thou applaud them if thy breast be cold
To him, this other hero; who, in times
Dark and untaught, began with charming verse
To tame the rudeness of his native land.

—MARK AKENSIDE

(*From*)

THE PROGRESS OF ENVY

Not far from these,* Dan Chaucer, antient wight,
A lofty seat on Mount Parnassus held,
Who long had been the Muses' chief delight;
His reverend locks were silver'd o'er with eld;
Grave was his visage, and his habit plain;
And while he sung, fair nature he display'd
In verse albeit uncouth, and simple strain;
Ne mote he well be seen, so thick the shade
Which elms and aged oaks had all around him made.

—ROBERT LLOYD

*Spenser and Milton.

TO CHAUCER

Chaucer, O how I wish thou wert
Alive and, as of yore, alert!
Then, after bandied tales, what fun
Would we two have with monk and nun.
Ah, surely verse was never meant
To render mortals somnolent.
In Spenser's labyrinthine rhymes
I throw my arms o'erhead at times,
Opening sonorous mouth as wide
As oystershells at ebb of tide.
Mistake me not: I honour him
Whose magic made the Muses dream
Of things they never knew before,
And scenes they never wandered o'er.
I dare not follow, nor again
Be wafted with the wizard train.
No bodyless and soulless elves
I seek, but creatures like ourselves.
If any poet now runs after
The Faeries, they will split with laughter,
Leaving him in the desert, where

Dry grass is emblematic fare.
Thou wast content to act the squire
Becomingly, and mount no higher,
Nay, at fit season to descend
Into the poet with a friend,
Then ride with him about thy land
In lithesome nutbrown boots well-tann'd,
With lordly greyhound, who would dare
Course against law the summer hare,
Nor takes to heart the frequent crack
Of whip, with curse that calls him back.
The lesser Angels now have smiled
To see thee frolic like a child,
And hear thee, innocent as they,
Provoke them to come down and play.

—WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

CHAUCER AND WINDSOR

Long shalt thou flourish, Windsor! bodying forth
Chivalric times, and long shall live around
Thy Castle—the old oaks of British birth,
Whose gnarled roots, tenacious and profound,
As with a lion's talons grasp the ground.
But should thy towers in ivied ruin rot,
There's one, thine inmate once, whose strain renown'd
Would interdict thy name to be forgot;
For Chaucer loved thy bowers and trode this very spot.
Chaucer! our Helicon's first fountain-stream,
Our morning star of song—that led the way
To welcome the long-after coming beam
Of Spenser's light and Shakespeare's perfect day.
Old England's fathers live in Chaucer's lay,
As if they ne'er had died. He group'd and drew
Their likeness with a spirit of life so gay,
That still they live and breathe in Fancy's view.
Fresh beings fraught with truth's imperishable hue.

—THOMAS CAMPBELL

WRITTEN ON THE BLANK SPACE OF A LEAF AT
THE END OF CHAUCER'S TALE OF "THE
FLOWRE AND THE LEFE."*

This pleasant tale is like a little copse:
The honied lines so freshly interlace,
To keep the reader in so sweet a place,
So that he here and there full-hearted stops;
And oftentimes he feels the dewy drops
Come cool and suddenly against his face,
And, by the wandering melody, may trace
Which way the tender-legged linnet hops.
Oh! what a power has white simplicity!
What mighty power has this gentle story!
I, that do ever feel athirst for glory,
Could at this moment be content to lie
Meekly upon the grass, as those whose sobbings
Were heard of none beside the mournful robins.

1817

—JOHN KEATS

CHAUCER†

An old man in a lodge within a park;
The chamber walls depicted all around
With portraitures of huntsman, hawk, and hound,
And the hurt deer. He listeneth to the lark,
Whose song comes with the sunshine through the dark
Of painted glass in leaden lattice bound;
He listeneth and he laugheth at the sound,
Then writeth in a book like any clerk.
He is the poet of the dawn, who wrote
The Canterbury Tales, and his old age
Made beautiful with song; and as I read
I hear the crowing cock, I hear the note
Of lark and linnet, and from every page
Rise odors of ploughed field or flowery mead.

—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

*Mr. Clark had fallen asleep over the book, and on waking, found it on his lap with this addition.

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(From)

A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN

I read, before my eyelids dropt their shade,
"The Legend of Good Women," long ago
Sung by the morning star of song, who made
His music heard below;

Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still.

And, for a while, the knowledge of his art
Held me above the subject, as strong gales
Hold swollen clouds from raining, tho' my heart,
Brimful of those wild tales,

Charged both mine eyes with tears.

—ALFRED TENNYSON

IN SPRING

In Spring, when the breast of the lime-grove gathers
Its roseate cloud; when the flushed streams sing,
And the mavis tricks her in gayer feathers;

Read Chaucer then; for Chaucer is spring!
On lonely evenings in dull Novembers

When rills run choked under skies of lead,
And on forest-hearths the year's last embers
Wind-heaped and glowing, lie, yellow and red,
Read Chaucer still! In his ivied beaker

With knights and wood-gods, and saints embossed
Spring hides her head till the wintry breaker
Thunders no more on the far-off coast.

—AUBREY DE VERE

THE POETRY OF CHAUCER

Grey with all honours of age! but fresh-featured and ruddy
As dawn when the drowsy farm-yard has thrice heard
Chaunticlere.

Tender to tearfulness—childlike, and manly, and motherly;
Here beats true English blood richest joyance on sweet
English ground.

—GEORGE MEREDITH

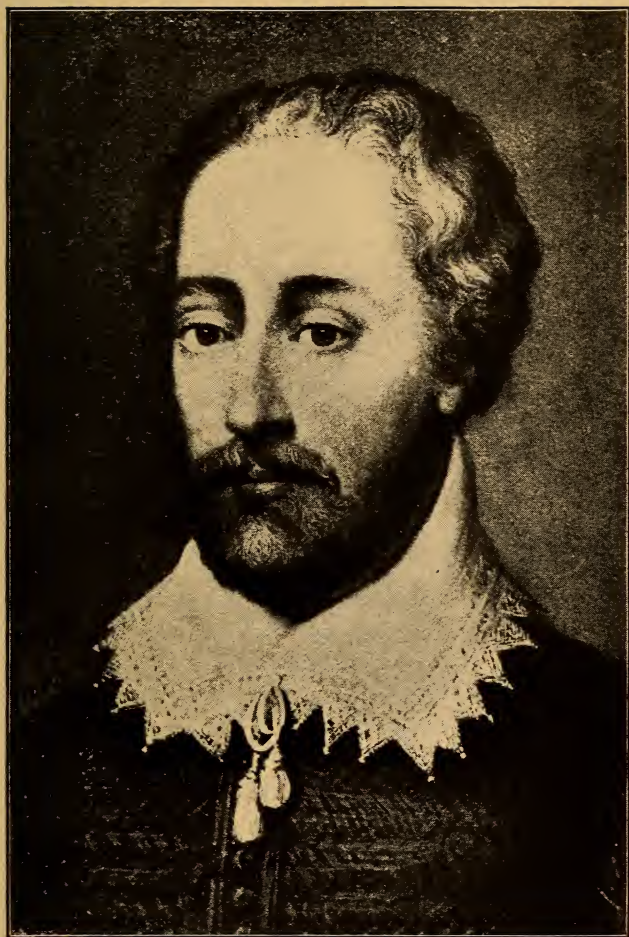
(From)

ON A COUNTRY ROAD

Our father, lord long since of lordly rhyme . . .
 Each year that England clothes herself with May,
 She takes thy likeness on her. Time hath spun
 Fresh raiment all in vain and strange array
 For earth and man's new spirit, fain to shun
 Things past for dreams of better to be won,
 Through many a century since thy funeral chime
 Rang, and men deemed it death's most direful crime
 To have spared not thee for very love or shame;
 And yet, while mists round last year's memories climb,
 Our father Chaucer, here we praise thy name . . .
 . . . the soul sublime
 That sang for song's love more than lust of fame.

—CHARLES ALGERNON SWINBURNE

EDMUND SPENSER
1552?—1599



EDMUND SPENSER

(From)

OF POETS AND POESY

Grave moral Spenser,
Than whom, I am persuaded, there was none,
Since the blind Bard, his *Iliads* up did make,
Fitter a task like that, to undertake;
To set down boldly! bravely to invent!
In all high knowledge, surely, excellent!

—MICHAEL DRAYTON

(From)

AN ACCOUNT OF THE GREATEST ENGLISH POETS

Old Spenser, next, warm'd with poetic rage,
In ancient tales amus'd a barb'rous age;
An age that yet uncultivate and rude,
Where'er the poet's fancy led, pursu'd
Through pathless fields, and unfrequented floods,
To dens of dragons, and enchanted woods.
But now the mystic tale, that pleas'd of yore,
Can charm an understanding age no more;
The long-spun allegories fulsome grow,
While the dull moral lies too plain below.
We view well-pleas'd at distance all the sights
Of arms and palfries, battles, fields, and fights,
And damsels in distress, and courteous knights.
But when we look too near, the shades decay,
And all the pleasing landscape fades away.

—JOSEPH ADDISON

ODE TO THE KING

Sage Spenser waked his lofty lay
To grace Eliza's golden sway:
O'er the proud theme new lustre to diffuse,
He chose the gorgeous allegoric muse,
And call'd to life old Uther's elfin tale,
And rov'd thro' many a necromantic vale,
Portraying chiefs that knew to tame
The goblin's ire, the dragon's flame,
To pierce the dark enchanted hall,
Where virtue sate in lonely thrall.
From fabling Fancy's inmost store
A rich romantic robe he bore;
A veil with visionary trappings hung,
And o'er his virgin-queen the fairy texture flung.
—THOMAS WARTON

(*From*)

THE PRELUDE

That gentle Bard,
Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State—
Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace,
I called him Brother, Englishman, and Friend!
—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

(*From*)

THE LAY OF THE LAUREATE

17

But then my Master dear arose to mind,
He on whose song while yet I was a boy,
My spirit fed, attracted to its kind,
And still insatiate of the growing joy;
He on whose tomb these eyes were wont to dwell,
With inward yearnings which I may not tell;

18

He whose green bays shall bloom forever young,
And whose dear name whenever I repeat,
Reverence and love are trembling on my tongue;
Sweet Spenser, sweetest Bard; yet not more sweet
Than pure was he, and not more pure than wise,
High Priest of all the Muses' mysteries.

—ROBERT SOUTHEY

SONNET

Spenser! a jealous honourer of thine,
A forester deep in thy midmost trees,
Did, last eve, ask my promise to refine
Some English, that might strive thine ear to please.
But, Elfin-poet! 'tis impossible
For an inhabitant of wintry earth
To rise, like Phoebus, with a golden quill,
Fire-wing'd, and make a morning in his mirth.
It is impossible to 'scape from toil
O' the sudden, and receive thy spiriting:
The flower must drink the nature of the soil
Before it can put forth its blossoming:
Be with me in the summer days, and I
Will for thine honour and his pleasure try.

—JOHN KEATS

SPENSER

Sweet was the youth of virgin Poesy,
That virgin sweetness which she gave to thee,
My Spenser, bard of happy innocence!
For thou didst with a bridegroom's love intense
Caress the fair inventions of thy brain,
Those babes of paradise, without the pain
Of mortal birth, to fairest heritage
Born in the freshness of their perfect age.
Thy Faery Knight had all the world in fee,
For all the world was Faeryland to thee.
Thine is no tale, once acted, then forgot;
Thy creatures never were, and never will be not.
Oh! look not for them in the dark abyss
Where all things have been, and where nothing is—
The spectral past;—nor in the troubled sea
Where all strange fancies are about to be—
The unabiding present. Seek them where
For ever lives the Good, the True, the Fair,
In the eternal silence of the heart.
There Spenser found them; thence his magic art
Their shades evoked in feature, form, and limb,
Real as a human self, and bright as cherubim.
And what though wistful love and emulous arms,
And all the wizard might of mutter'd charms,—
Though slimy snakes disgorge their loathly rage,
And monstrous phantoms wait on Archimage:
These are but dreams, that come, and go, and peep
Through the thin curtain of a morning sleep,
And leave no pressure on the soul, that wakes
And hails the glad creation that it makes.

—HARTLEY COLERIDGE

THE POETRY OF SPENSER

Lakes where the sunsheen is mystic with splendour and softness;

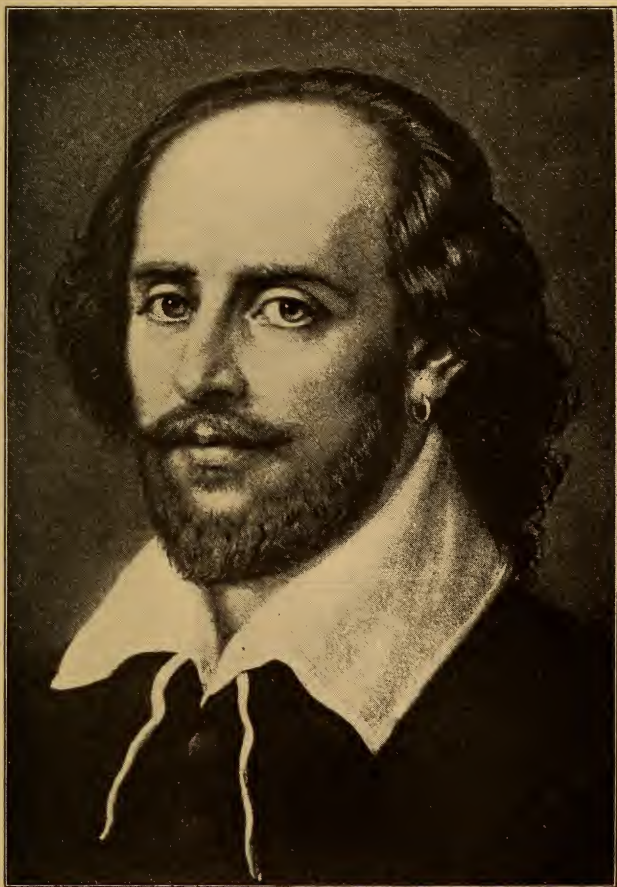
Vales where sweet life is all Summer with golden romance;

Forests that glimmer with twilight round revel-bright palaces;

Here in our May-blood we wander, careering 'mongst ladies and knights.

—GEORGE MEREDITH

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
1564—1616



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

(*From*)

THE TEARES OF THE MUSES

And he, the man whom Nature selfe had made
To mock her selfe, and Truth to imitate,
With kindly counter under Mimick shade,
Our pleasant Willy, ah! is dead of late:
With whom all joy and jolly meriment
Is also deaded, and in dolour drent.

—EDMUND SPENSER

(*From*)

OF POETS AND POESY

. And be it said of thee,
Shakespeare! thou hadst as smooth a comic vein,
Fitting the Sock! and, in thy natural brain,
As strong conception, and as clear a rage,
As any one that trafficked with the Stage!

—MICHAEL DRAYTON

TO THE MEMORY OF MY BELOVED, THE AUTHOR, MASTER WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE; AND WHAT HE HATH LEFT US

To draw no envy, Shakespeare! on thy Name,
Am I thus ample to thy Book and fame;
While I confess thy Writings to be such
As neither Man, nor Muse, can praise too much!
'Tis true! and all men's suffrage! But these ways
Were not the paths, I meant unto thy praise!

For silliest Ignorance on these may light;
Which, when it sounds at best, 's but Echo's right!
Or blind Affection, which doth ne'er advance
The truth; but gropes, and urgeth all by chance!
Or crafty Malice might pretend this praise;
And think to ruin, where it seemed to raise!

These are, as some infamous bawd, or whore,
Should praise a Matron! What could hurt her more?

But thou art proof against them: and, indeed,
Above th' ill fortune of them; or the need!

I therefore will begin. Soul of the Age!
The applause, delight, and wonder, of our Stage!
My Shakespeare, rise! I will not lodge thee by
Chaucer, or Spenser; or bid Beaumont lie
A little further, to make thee a room!
Thou art a Monument, without a tomb!
And art alive still, while thy Book doth live;
And we have wits to read, and praise to give.

That I not mix thee so, my brain excuses;
I mean, with great, but disproportioned, Muses:
For, if I thought my judgment were of years,
I should commit thee, surely, with thy peers!
And tell, how far thou didst our Lyly outshine;
Or sporting Kyd, or Marlow's mighty line.

And though thou hadst small Latin, and less Greek;
From thence, to honour thee, I would not seek
For names: but call forth thund'ring Aeschylus,
Euripides, and Sophocles to us!
Paccuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,
To life again! to hear thy Buskin tread
And shake a Stage! Or when thy Sock was on,
Leave thee alone! for the comparison
Of all that insolent Greece, or haughty Rome,
Sent forth; or since did, from their ashes come.

Triumph, my Britain! Thou hast one to show,
To whom all Scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an Age; but for all Time!
And all the Muses still were in their prime,
When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm
Our ears; or, like a Mercury, to charm.

Nature herself was proud of his designs;
And joyed to wear the dressing of his lines!

Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other Wit!
The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,
Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please!
But antiquated and deserted lie,
As they were not of Nature's family.

Yet must I not give Nature all! Thy Art,
My gentle Shakespeare! must enjoy a part!
For though the Poet's matter, Nature be;
His Art doth give the fashion! And that he
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat
(Such as thine are!), and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses' anvil! turn the same,
(And himself with it!) that he thinks to frame!
Or for the laurel; he may gain a scorn!

For a good Poet's made, as well as born;
And such wert thou! Look how the father's face
Lives in his issue; even so, the race
Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines
In his well-turned and true-fillèd lines!
In each of which, he seems to Shake a Lance!
As brandished at the eyes of Ignorance.

Sweet Swan of Avon! What a sight it were,
To see thee in our waters yet appear;
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
That so did take Eliza, and our James!

But, stay! I see thee in the hemisphere
Advanced; and make a Constellation there!
Shine forth, thou Star of Poets! and with rage,
Or influence, chide, or cheer, the drooping Stage!
Which, since thy flight from hence, hath mourned like
night
And despairs day, but for thy Volume's light.

—BEN JONSON

ON SHAKESPEAR. 1630

What needs my *Shakespear* for his honour'd Bones,
The labour of an age in piled Stones,
Or that his hallow'd reliques should be hid
Under a Star-ypointing *Pyramid*?
Dear son of memory, great heir of Fame,
What need'st thou such weak witnes of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thy self a live-long Monument.
For whilst to th' shame of slow-endeavouring art,
Thy easie numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalu'd Book,
Those Delphick lines with deep impression took,
Then thou our fancy of it self bereaving,
Dost make us Marble with too much conceaving;
And so Sepulcher'd in such pomp dost lie,
That Kings for such a Tomb would wish to die.

—JOHN MILTON

(*From*)

PROLOGUE

SPOKEN BY MR. GARRICK,
AT THE OPENING OF THE THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE,
1747

When Learning's triumph o'er her barb'rous foes
First reared the Stage, immortal Shakespeare rose!
Each change of many-coloured life he drew;
Exhausted Worlds, and then imagined new!
Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign;
And panting Time toiled after him in vain!
His powerful strokes presiding Truth imprest;
And unresisted Passion stormed the breast!

—SAMUEL JOHNSON

(From)

THE PROGRESS OF POESY

III

Far from the sun and summer gale,
In thy green lap was Nature's Darling* laid,
What time, where lucid Avon strayed,
To him the mighty Mother did unveil
Her awful face. The dauntless Child
Stretched forth his little arms, and smiled.
'This pencil take,' she said, 'whose colours clear
Richly paint the vernal year:
Thine too, these golden keys, immortal Boy!
This can unlock the gates of Joy;
Of Horror that, and thrilling Fears,
Or ope the sacred source of sympathetic Tears!'

—THOMAS GRAY

WARWICKSHIRE†

Ye Warwickshire Lads, and ye Lasses!
See what at our Jubilee passes!
Come, revel away! Rejoice, and be glad!
For the Lad of all lads, was a Warwickshire Lad!
Warwickshire Lad!
All be glad,
For the Lad of all lads, was a Warwickshire Lad!

Be proud of the charms of your County;
Where Nature has lavished her bounty!
Where much she has given, and some to be spared;
For the Bard of all bards, was a Warwickshire Bard!
Warwickshire Bard!
Never paired!
For the Bard of all bards, was a Warwickshire Bard!

*Shakespeare.

†Songs in connection with the Shakespeare Jubilee at Stratford-upon-Avon, September 7, 1769.

Each Shire has its different pleasures,
Each Shire has its different treasures:
But to rare Warwickshire all must submit;
For the Wit of all wits, was a Warwickshire Wit!
Warwickshire Wit!
How he writ!
For the Wit of all wits, was a Warwickshire Wit!

Old Ben, Thomas Otway, John Dryden;
And half a score more, we take pride in!
Of famous Will Congreve we boast too the skill;
But the Will of all Wills, was a Warwickshire Will!
Warwickshire Will!
Matchless still!
For the Will of Wills, was a Warwickshire Will!

Our Shakespeare compared is to no man;
Nor Frenchman, nor Grecian, nor Roman!
Their swans are all geese, to the Avon's sweet Swan;
And the Man of all men, was a Warwickshire Man!
Warwickshire Man!
Avon's Swan!
And the Man of all men, was a Warwickshire Man!

As ven'son is very inviting,
To steal it our Bard took delight in!
To make his friends merry, he never was lag:
And the Wag of all wags, was a Warwickshire Wag!
Warwickshire Wag!
Ever brag!
For the Wag of all wags, was a Warwickshire Wag!

There never was seen such a creature!
Of all she was worth, he robbed Nature!
He took all her smiles, and he took all her grief;
And the Thief of all thieves, was a Warwickshire Thief!
Warwickshire Thief!
He's the chief!
For the Thief of all thieves, was a Warwickshire Thief!

—DAVID GARRICK

(From)

INSCRIPTIONS

IV

O youths and virgins: O declining eld:
O pale misfortune's slaves: O ye who dwell
Unknown with humble quiet; ye who wait
In courts, or fill the golden seat of kings:
O sons of sport and pleasure: O thou wretch
That weep'st for jealous love, or the sore wounds
Of conscious guilt, or death's rapacious hand
Which left thee void of hope: O ye who roam
In exile; ye who through the embattled field
Seek bright renown; or who for nobler palms
Contend, the leaders of a public cause;
Approach: behold this marble. Know ye not
The features? Hath not oft his faithful tongue
Told you the fashion of your own estate,
The secrets of your bosom? Here then, round
His monument with reverence while ye stand,
Say to each other: —'This was Shakespeare's form;
Who walk'd in every path of human life,
Felt every passion; and to all mankind
Doth now, will ever, that experience yield
Which his own genius only could acquire.'

—MARK AKENSIDE

SHAKESPEARE

O sovereign Master! who with lonely state
Dost rule as in some isle's enchanted land,
On whom soft airs and shadowy spirits wait,
Whilst scenes of "faerie" bloom at thy command,
On thy wild shores forgetful could I lie,
And list, till earth dissolved to thy sweet minstrelsy!

Called by thy magic from the hoary deep,
Aerial forms should in bright troops ascend,
And then a wondrous masque before me sweep;
Whilst sounds, *that the earth owned not*, seem to blend
Their stealing melodies, that when the strain
Ceased, *I should weep, and would so dream again!*

The song hath ceased. Ah! who, pale shade, art thou,
Sad raving to the rude tempestuous night!
Sure thou hast had much wrong, so stern thy brow,
So piteous thou dost tear thy tresses white;
So wildly thou dost cry, *Blow, bitter wind!*
*Ye elements, I call not you unkind!**

Beneath the shade of nodding branches grey,
'Mid rude romantic woods, and glens forlorn,
The merry hunters wear the hours away;
Rings the deep forest to the joyous horn!
Joyous to all, but him,† who with sad look
Hangs idly musing by the brawling brook.

But mark the merry elves of fairy land!‡
To the high moon's gleamy glance,
They with shadowy morris dance;
Soft music dies along the desert sand;
Soon at peep of cold-eyed day,
Soon the numerous lights decay;
Merrily, now merrily,
After the dewy moon they fly.

The charm is wrought: I see an aged form,
In white robes, on the winding sea-shore stand;
O'er the careering surge he waves his wand:
Hark! on the bleak rock bursts the swelling storm:

*Lear.

†Jaques: As You Like It.

‡Midsummer Nights Dream.

Now from bright opening clouds I hear a lay,
Come to these yellow sands, fair stranger, come away!*

Saw ye pass by the weird sisters pale!†
Marked ye the lowering castle on the heath!
Hark, hark, is the deed done—the deed of death!
The deed is done:—Hail, king of Scotland, hail!
I see no more;—to many a fearful sound
The bloody cauldron sinks, and all is dark around.

Pity! touch the trembling strings,
A maid, a beauteous maniac, wildly sings:
They laid him in the ground so cold,‡
Upon his breast the earth is thrown;
High is heaped the grassy mould,
Oh! he is dead and gone.
The winds of the winter blow o'er his cold breast,
But pleasant shall be his rest.

O sovereign Master! at whose sole command
We start with terror, or with pity weep;
Oh! where is now thy all-creating wand;
Buried ten thousand thousand fathoms deep!
The staff is broke, the powerful spell is fled,
And never earthly guest shall in thy circle tread.
—WILLIAM LISLE BOWLES

TO SHAKESPEARE

The soul of man is larger than the sky,
Deeper than ocean—or the abysmal dark
Of the unfathom'd centre. Like that Ark,
Which in its sacred hold uplifted high,
O'er the drown'd hills, the human family,

*Ferdinand: see *The Tempest*.

†Macbeth.

‡Ophelia: *Hamlet*.

And stock reserved of every living kind,
So, in the compass of the single mind,
The seeds and pregnant forms in essence lie,
That make all worlds. Great Poet, 'twas thy art
To know thyself, and in thyself to be
Whate'er love, hate, ambition, destiny,
Or the firm, fatal purpose of the heart,
Can make of Man. Yet thou wert still the same,
Serene of thought, unhurt by thy own flame.

—HARTLEY COLERIDGE

SHAKESPEARE*

A vision as of crowded city streets,
With human life in endless overflow;
Thunder of thoroughfares; trumpets that blow
To battle; clamor, in obscure retreats,
Of sailors landed from their anchored fleets;
Tolling of bells in turrets, and below
Voices of children, and bright flowers that throw
O'er garden-walls their intermingled sweets!
This vision comes to me when I unfold
The volume of the Poet paramount,
Whom all the Muses loved, not one alone;—
Into his hands they put the lyre of gold,
And, crowned with sacred laurel at their fount,
Placed him as Musagetes on their throne.

—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

THE NAMES†

Shakespeare!—To such name's sounding, what succeeds
Fitly as silence? Falter forth the spell,—
Act follows word, the speaker knows full well,
Nor tampers with its magic more than needs.
Two names there are: That which the Hebrew reads
With his soul only: if from lips it fell,
Echo, back thundered by earth, heaven and hell,

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Would own "Thou didst create us!" Naught impedes
We voice the other name, man's most of might,
Awesomely, lovingly: let awe and love
Mutely await their working, leave to sight
All of the issue as—below—above—
Shakespeare's creation rises: one remove,
Through dread—this finite from that infinite.

—ROBERT BROWNING

SHAKESPEARE

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,

Planting his stedfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality;

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguess'd at.—Better so!

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

—MATTHEW ARNOLD

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

(APRIL 23, 1564)

She sat in her eternal house,
The sovereign mother of mankind;
Before her was the peopled world,
The hollow night behind.

“Below my feet the thunders break,
Above my head the stars rejoice;
But man, although he babbles much,
Has never found a voice.

Ten thousand years have come and gone,
And not an hour of any day
But he has dumbly looked to me
The things he could not say.

It shall be so no more,” she said.
And then, revolving in her mind,
She thought: “I will create a child
Shall speak for all his kind.”

It was the spring-time of the year,
And lo, where Avon’s waters flow,
The child, her darling, came on earth
Three hundred years ago.

There was no portent in the sky,
No cry, like Pan’s, along the seas,
Nor hovered round his baby mouth
The swarm of classic bees.

What other children were he was,
If more, ’t was not to mortal ken;
The being likest to mankind
Made him the man of men.

They gossiped, after he was dead,
An idle tale of stealing deer;
One thinks he was a lawyer’s clerk;
But nothing now is clear,

Save that he married, in his youth,
A maid, his elder; went to town;

Wrote plays, made money; and at last
Came back, and settled down,

A prosperous man, among his kin,
In Stratford, where his bones repose.
And this—what can be less? is all
The world of Shakespeare knows.

It irks us that we know no more,
For where we love we would know all;
What would be small in common men
In great is never small.

Their daily habits, how they looked,
The color of their eyes and hair,
Their prayers, their oaths, the wine they drank,
The clothes they used to wear,

Trifles like these declare the men,
And should survive them—nay, they must;
We'll find them somewhere; if it needs,
We'll rake among their dust!

Not Shakespeare's! He hath left his curse
On him disturbs it: let it rest,
The mightiest that ever Death
Laid in the earth's dark breast.

Not to himself did he belong,
Nor does his life belong to us;
Enough he *was*; give up the search
If he were thus, or thus.

Before he came his like was not,
Nor left he heirs to share his powers;
The mighty Mother sent him here,
To be her voice and ours.

To be her oracle to man;
To be what man may be to her;
Between the Maker and the made
The best interpreter.

The hearts of all men beat in his,
Alike in pleasure and in pain;
And he contained their myriad minds,
Mankind in heart and brain.

Shakespeare! What shapes are conjured up
By that one word! They come and go,
More real, shadows though they be,
Than many a man we know.

Hamlet, the Dane, unhappy Prince
Who most enjoys when suffering most:
His soul is haunted by itself—
There needs no other Ghost.

The Thane, whose murderous fancy sees
The dagger painted in the air;
The guilty King, who stands appalled
When Banquo fills his chair.

Lear in the tempest, old and crazed,
“Blow winds. Spit fire, singe my white head!”
Or, sadder, watching for the breath
Of dear Cordelia—dead!

The much-abused, relentless Jew,
Grave Prospero, in his magic isle,
And she who captived Anthony,
The serpent of old Nile.

Imperial forms, heroic souls,
Greek, Roman, masters of the world,

Kings, queens, the soldier, scholar, priest,
The courtier, sleek and curled;

He knew and drew all ranks of men,
And did such life to them impart
They grow not old, immortal types,
The lords of Life and Art!

Their sovereign he, as she was his,
The awful Mother of the Race,
Who, hid from all her children's eyes,
Unveiled to him her face;

Spake to him till her speech was known,
Through him till man had learned it; then
Enthroned him in her Heavenly House,
The most Supreme of Men!

—RICHARD HENRY STODDARD

THE SPIRIT OF SHAKESPEARE

I

Thy greatest knew thee, Mother Earth; unsour'd
He knew thy sons. He prob'd from hell to hell
Of human passions, but of love deflower'd
His wisdom was not, for he knew thee well.
Thence came the honey'd corner at his lips,
The conquering smile wherein his spirit sails
Calm as the God who the white sea-wave whips,
Yet full of speech and intershifting tales,
Close mirrors of us: thence had he the laugh
We feel is thine; broad as ten thousand beeves
At pasture! thence thy songs that winnow chaff
From grain, bid sick Philosophy's last leaves
Whirl, if they have no response—they enforced
To fatten Earth when from her soul divorced.

II

How smiles he at a generation rank'd
In gloomy noddings over life! They pass.
Not he to feed upon a breast unthank'd,
Or eye a beauteous face in a crack'd glass.
But he can spy that little twist of brain
Which mov'd some weighty leader of the blind,
Unwitting 'twas the goad of personal pain,
To view in curs'd eclipse our Mother's mind,
And show us of some rigid harridan
The wretched bondmen till the end of time.
O liv'd the Master now to paint us Man,
That little twist of brain would ring a chime
Of whence it came and what it caus'd, to start
Thunders of laughter, clearing air and heart.
—GEORGE MEREDITH

THE POETRY OF SHAKESPEARE

Picture some Isle smiling green 'mid the white-foaming
ocean;—
Full of old woods, leafy wisdoms, and frolicsome fays;
Passions and pageants; sweet love singing bird-like above
it;
Life in all shapes, aims, and fates, is there warm'd by one
great human heart.

—GEORGE MEREDITH

STRATFORD-ON-AVON

Be glad in heaven above all souls insphered,
Most royal and most loyal born of men,
Shakespeare, of all on earth beloved or feared
Or worshipped, highest in sight of human ken.
The homestead hallowed by thy sovereign birth,
Whose name, being one with thine, stands higher than
Rome,

Forgets not how of all on English earth
Their trust is holiest, there who have their home.
Stratford is thine and England's. None that hate
The commonweal whose empire sets men free
Find comfort there, where once by grace of fate
A soul was born as boundless as the sea.

If life, if love, if memory now be thine,
Rejoice that still thy Stratford bears thy sign.

—ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Not if men's tongues and angels' all in one
Spake, might the word be said that might speak Thee.
Streams, winds, woods, flowers, fields, mountains, yea,
the sea,

What power is in them all to praise the sun?

His praise is this,—he can be praised of none.

Man, woman, child, praise God for him; but he

Exults not to be worshipped, but to be.

He is; and, being, beholds his work well done.

All joy, all glory, all sorrow, all strength, all mirth,

Are his: without him, day were night on earth.

Time knows not his from time's own period.

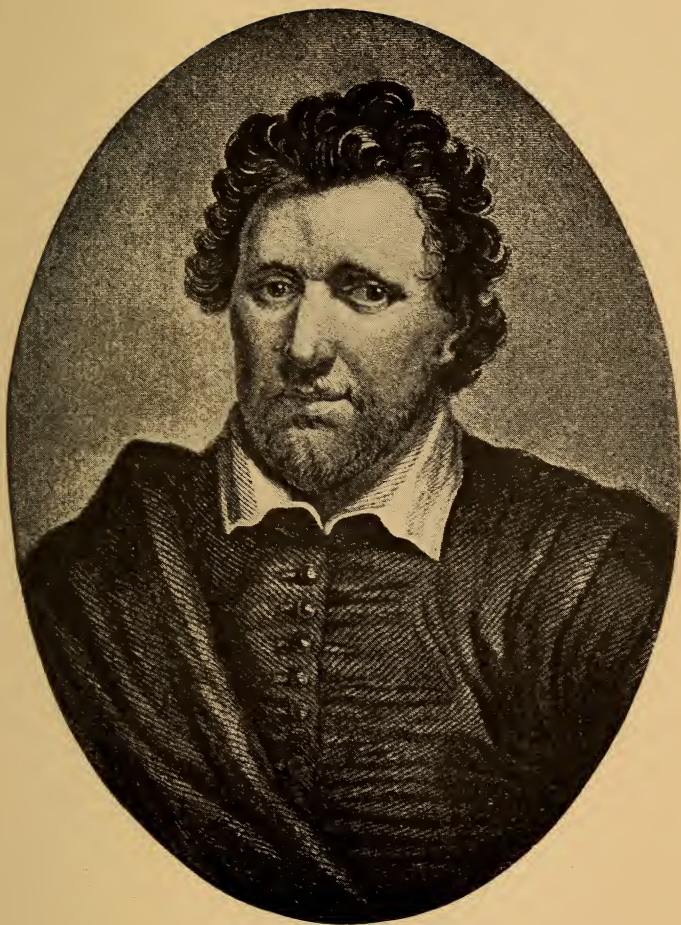
All lutes, all harps, all viols, all flutes, all lyres,

Fall dumb before him ere one string suspires.

All stars are angels; but the sun is God.

—ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

BEN JONSON
1573?-1637



BEN JONSON

(From)

OF POETS AND POESY

Next these, learn'd Jonson, in this list I bring:
Who had drunk deep of the Pierian spring,
Whose knowledge did him worthily prefer;
And long was Lord here of the Theatre.
Who, in opinion, made our learn't to stick,
Whether in Poems rightly Dramatic,
Strong Seneca, or Plautus, he, or they,
Should bear the Buskin, or the Sock, away?

—MICHAEL DRAYTON

PRAYER TO BEN JONSON

When I a Verse shall make,
Know, I have praid thee,
For old *Religion's* sake,
Saint *Ben*, to aide me!
Make the way smooth for me
When I, thy *Herrick*,
Honouring thee, on my knee
Offer my *Lyrick*
Candles Ile give to thee,
And a new Altar;
And thou, Saint *Ben*, shalt be
Writ in my *Psalter*!

—ROBERT HERRICK

AN ODE FOR BEN JONSON

Ah Ben!
Say how, or when
Shall we thy Guests,
Meet at those Lyric Feasts,
Made at the Sun,
The Dog, the Triple Tunne?

Where we such clusters had,
As made us nobly wild, not mad;
And yet each Verse of thine
Out-did the meate, out-did the frolick wine.

My Ben!
Or come agen:
Or send to us,
Thy wit's great over-plus;
But teach us yet
Wisely to husband it;
Lest we that Tallent spend:
And having once brought to an end
That precious stock; the store
Of such a wit; the world sho'd have no more.
—ROBERT HERRICK

UPON BEN JONSON

Mirror of poets! mirror of our age!
Which her whole face beholding on thy stage,
Pleased and displeased with her own faults, endures
A remedy like those whom music cures.
Thou hast alone those various inclinations
Which Nature gives to ages, sexes, nations;
So traced with thy all-resembling pen,
That whate'er custom has imposed on men,
Or ill-got habit (which deforms them so,
That scarce a brother can his brother know)
Is represented to the wondering eyes
Of all that see, or read, thy comedies.
Whoever in those glasses looks, may find
The spots returned, or graces, of his mind;
And by the help of so divine an art,
At leisure view, and dress, his nobler part.
Narcissus, cozened by that flattering well,
Which nothing could but of his beauty tell,
Had here, discovering the deformed estate

Of his fond mind, preserved himself with hate.
But virtue too, as well as vice, is clad
In flesh and blood so well, that Plato had
Beheld, what his high fancy once embraced,
Virtue with colours, speech, and motion graced.
The sundry postures of thy copious Muse
Who would express, a thousand tongues must use;
Whose fate's no less peculiar than thy art;
For as thou couldst all characters impart,
So none could render thine, which still escapes,
Like Proteus, in variety of shapes;
Who was nor this nor that; but all we find,
And all we can imagine, in mankind.

—EDMUND WALLER

(*From*)

PROLOGUE

SPOKEN BY MR. GARRICK,
AT THE OPENING OF THE THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE,
1747

Then Jonson came,* instructed from the School,
To please in method, and invent by rule.
His studious patience and laborious art
By regular approach assayed the heart!
Cold Approbation gave the ling'ring Bays;
For those who durst not censure, scarce could praise!
A mortal born, he met the general doom;
But left, like Egypt's Kings, a lasting tomb.

—SAMUEL JOHNSON

*After Shakespeare.

THE ROSCIAD

The book of man he read with nicest art,
And ransack'd all the secrets of the heart;
Exerted penetration's utmost force,
And traced each passion to its proper source;
Then, strongly mark'd, in liveliest colours drew
And brought each foible forth to public view:
The coxcomb felt a lash in every word,
And fools, hung out, their brother fools deterr'd.
His comic humour kept the world in awe,
And laughter frighten'd Folly more than Law.

—CHARLES CHURCHILL

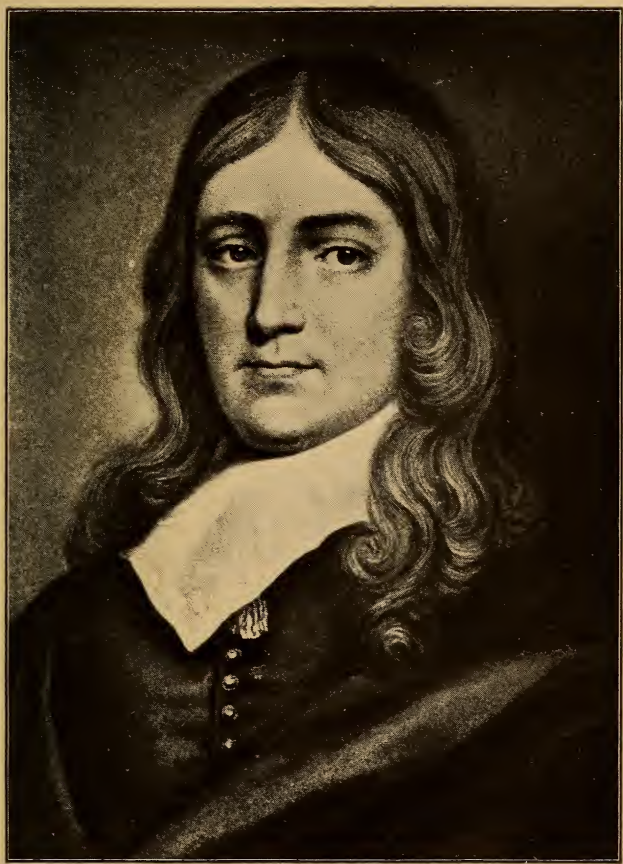
BEN JONSON

Broad-based, broad-fronted, bounteous, multiform,
With many a valley impleached with ivy and vine,
Wherein the springs of all the streams run wine,
And many a crag full-faced against the storm,
The mountain where thy Muse's feet made warm
Those lawns that revelled with her dance divine
Shines yet with fire as it was wont to shine
From tossing torches round the dance aswarm.

Nor less, high-stationed on the grey grave heights,
High-thoughted seers with heaven's heart-kindling lights
Hold converse: and the herd of meaner things
Knows or by fiery scourge or fiery shaft
When wrath on thy broad brows has risen, and laughed
Darkening thy soul with shadow of thunderous wings.

—ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

JOHN MILTON
1608-1674



JOHN MILTON



UNDER THE PORTRAIT OF JOHN MILTON

Three poets, in three distant ages born.
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed,
The next in majesty, in both the last:
The force of Nature could no farther go;
To make a third, she join'd the former two.

—JOHN DRYDEN

ON MASTER MILTON'S 'PARADISE LOST'

When I beheld the Poet blind, yet bold,
In slender book his vast design unfold,
Messiah crowned, GOD'S reconciled decree,
Rebelling Angels, the Forbidden Tree,
Heaven, Hell, Earth, Chaos, All! the Argument
Held me a while: misdoubting his intent,
That he would ruin (for I saw him strong!)
The Sacred Truths, to Fable and old Song.
So Samson groped the Temple's posts in spite;
The World o'erwhelming, to revenge his sight.

Yet, as I read, soon growing less severe,
I liked his Project; the success did fear!
Through that wide field, how he his way should find,
O'er which lame Faith leads Understanding blind:
Lest he'd perplex the things he would explain;
And what was easy, he should render vain.

Or, if, a Work so infinite he spanned;
Jealous I was, that some less skilful hand
(Such as disquiet always what is well:
And by ill imitating, would excel!)
Might hence presume, the whole Creation's Day,
To change in Scenes; and show it in a Play!

Pardon me, mighty Poet! nor despise
My causeless, yet not impious, surmise!
But I am now convinced! and none will dare

Within thy labours to pretend a share!
Thou hast not missed one thought that could be fit;
And all that was improper dost omit:
So that no room is here for Writers left,
But to detect their ignorance, or theft.

That majesty which through thy Work doth reign,
Draws the devout; deterring the profane!
And things divine thou treat's(t) of in such State
As them preserves, and thee, inviolate!

At once Delight and Horror on us seize,
Thou sing'st with so much gravity and ease;
And, above human flight, doth soar aloft
With plume so strong, so equal, and so soft!
The Bird named from that Paradise you sing,
So never flags; but always keeps on wing.

Where couldst thou Words of such a compass find;
Whence furnish such a vast expanse of mind!
Just Heaven, thee, like Tiresias, to requite,
Rewards with Prophecy thy loss of sight!

Well might thou scorn, thy Readers to allure
With tinkling rhyme! of thy own sense secure:
While the Town-Bays writes all the while, and spells;
And, like a pack-horse, tires without his bells.
Their fancies like our bushy points appear:
The Poets tag them; we, for fashion, wear.
I too, transported by the mode, offend;
And while I meant to praise thee, must commend.

Thy Verse created, like thy Theme, sublime,
In number, weight, and measure, needs not rhyme.

—ANDREW MARVELL

(From)

AN ACCOUNT OF
THE GREATEST ENGLISH POETS

But Milton, next, with high and haughty stalks,
Unfetter'd in majestick numbers walks;
No vulgar hero can his muse ingage;
Nor earth's wide scene confine his hallow'd rage.
See! see, he upward springs, and tow'ring high
Spurns the dull province of mortality,
Shakes heaven's eternal throne with dire alarms,
And sets the Almighty thunderer in arms.
What-e'er his pen describes I more than see,
Whilst ev'ry verse arrayed in majesty,
Bold, and sublime, my whole attention draws,
And seems above the critick's nicer laws.
How are you struck with terror and delight,
When angel with arch-angel copes in fight!
When great Messiah's out-spread banner shines,
How does the chariot rattle in his lines!
What sounds of brazen wheels, what thunder, scare,
And stun the reader with the din of war!
With fear my spirits and my blood retire,
To see the seraphs sunk in clouds of fire;
But when, with eager steps, from hence I rise,
And view the first gay scenes of Paradise;
What tongue, what words of rapture can express
A vision so profuse of pleasantness.
Oh had the poet ne'er profan'd his pen,
To varnish o'er the guilt of faithless men;
His other works might have deserv'd applause!
But now the language can't support the cause;
While the clean current, tho' serene and bright,
Betrays a bottom odious to the sight.

—JOSEPH ADDISON

(*From*)

THE SEASONS,—SUMMER

Is not each great, each amiable Muse
Of classic ages in thy Milton met?
A genius universal as his theme;
Astonishing as Chaos, as the bloom
Of blowing Eden fair, as Heaven sublime!

—JAMES THOMSON

(*From*)

THE PROGRESS OF POESY

III

Nor second* He,† that rode sublime
Upon the Seraph-wings of ecstasy,
The secrets of th' Abyss to spy!
He passed the flaming bounds of Place and Time!
The living Throne, the sapphire blaze,
Where Angels tremble while they gaze,
He saw: but, blasted with excess of light,
Closed his eyes in endless night!
Behold! where Dryden's less presumptuous car
Wide o'er the Fields of Glory bear
Two coursers of ethereal race,
With necks in thunder clothed and long-resounding pace.

—THOMAS GRAY

*To Shakespeare.

†Milton.

MILTON

ON THE BUSTS OF MILTON, IN YOUTH AND AGE, AT
STOURHEAD

IN YOUTH

Milton, our noblest poet, in the grace
Of youth, in those fair eyes and clustering hair,
That brow untouched by one faint line of care,
To mar its openness, we seem to trace
The front of the first lord of human race,
'Mid thine own Paradise portrayed so fair,
Ere Sin or Sorrow scathed it: such the air
That characters thy youth. Shall time efface
These lineaments as crowding cares assail!
It is the lot of fall'n humanity.

What boots it! armed in adamant mail,
The unconquerable mind, and genius high,
Right onward hold their way through weal and woe,
Or whether life's brief lot be high or low!

—WILLIAM LISLE BOWLES

MILTON

IN AGE

And art thou he, now "fall'n on evil days,"
And changed indeed! Yet what do this sunk cheek,
These thinner locks, and that calm forehead speak!
A spirit reckless of man's blame or praise,—
A spirit, when thine eyes to the noon's blaze
Their dark orbs roll in vain, in suffering meek,
As in the sight of God intent to seek,
'Mid solitude or age, or through the ways
Of hard adversity, the approving look
Of its great Master; whilst the conscious pride
Of wisdom, patient and content to brook

All ills to that sole Master's task applied,
Shall show before high heaven the unaltered mind,
Milton, though thou art poor, and old, and blind!

—WILLIAM LISLE BOWLES

SONNET

Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

FRAGMENT: MILTON'S SPIRIT

I dreamed that Milton's spirit rose, and took
From life's green tree his Uranian lute;
And from his touch sweet thunder flowed, and shook
All human things built in contempt of man,—
And sanguine thrones and impious altars quaked,
Prisons and citadels

—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

ON A LOCK OF MILTON'S HAIR

"I was at Hunt's the other day, and he surprised me with a real authenticated lock of Milton's hair. I know you would like what I wrote thereon, so here it is—as they say of a Sheep in a Nursery Book. Jan. 1818.

Chief of organic numbers!
Old Scholar of the Spheres!
Thy spirit never slumbers,
But rolls about our ears
For ever and for ever!
O what a mad endeavour
Worketh He,
Who to thy sacred and ennobled hearse
Would offer a burnt sacrifice of verse
And melody.

How heavenward thou soundest!
Live Temple of sweet noise,
And Discord unconfoundest,
Giving Delight new joys,
And Pleasure nobler pinions:
O where are thy dominions?

Lend thine ear
To a young Delian oath—ay, by thy soul,
By all that from thy mortal lips did roll,
And by the kernel of thy earthly love,
Beauty in things on earth and things above,
I swear!

When every childish fashion
Has vanished from my rhyme,
Will I, grey gone in passion,
Leave to an after-time
Hymning and Harmony
Of thee and of thy works, and of thy life;

But vain is now the burning and the strife;
Pangs are in vain, until I grow high-rife
 With old Philosophy,
And mad with glimpses of futurity.

For many years my offerings must be hush'd;
When I do speak, I'll think upon this hour,
Because I feel my forehead hot and flushed,
Even at the simplest vassal of thy power,
 A lock of thy bright hair,—
 Sudden it came,
And I was startled when I caught thy name
 Coupled so unaware;
Yet at the moment temperate was my blood—
I thought I had beheld it from the flood!

—JOHN KEATS

MILTON*

I pace the sounding sea-beach and behold
How the voluminous billows roll and run,
Upheaving and subsiding, while the sun
Shines through their sheeted emerald far unrolled,
And the ninth wave, slow gathering fold by fold
All its loose-flowing garments into one,
Plunges upon the shore, and floods the dun
Pale reach of sands, and changes them to gold.
So in majestic cadence rise and fall
The mighty undulations of thy song,
O sightless bard, England's Maeonides!
And ever and anon, high over all
Uplifted, a ninth wave superb and strong,
Floods all the soul with its melodious seas.

—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

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MILTON

O mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies,
O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,
God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages;
Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armories,
Tower, as the deep-domed empyrean
Rings to the roar of an angel onset—
Me rather all that bowery loneliness,
The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,
And bloom profuse and cedar arches
Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
Where some refulgent sunset of India
Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods
Whisper in odorous heights of even.
—ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

THE POETRY OF MILTON

Like to some deep-chested organ whose grand inspiration,
Serenely majestic in utterance, lofty and calm,
Interprets to mortals with melody great as its burthen,
The mystical harmonies chiming for ever throughout the
bright spheres.

—GEORGE MEREDITH

MILTON

His feet were shod with music, and had wings
Like Hermes; far upon the peaks of song
His footfalls sounded silverly along;
The dull world blossomed into beauteous things
Where'er he trod; and Heliconian springs
Gushed from the rocks he touched; round him a throng
Of fair invisibles, seraphic, strong,

Struck Orphean murmers out of golden strings;
But he, spreading keen pinions for a white
Immensity of radiance and of peace,
Uplooming to the empyreal infinite,
Far through ethereal fields and zenith seas,
High, with strong wing-beats and with eagle ease,
Soared in a solitude of glorious light!

—LLOYD MIFFLIN

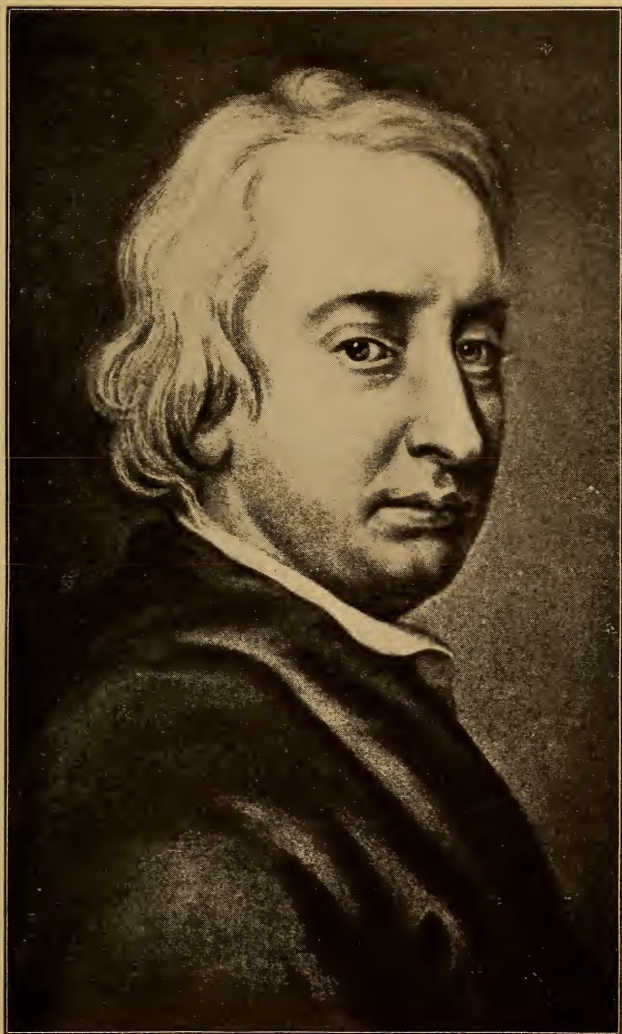
TO MILTON,—BLIND*

He who said suddenly, "Let there be light!"
To thee the dark deliberately gave;
That those full eyes might undistracted be
By this beguiling show of sky and field,
This brilliance, that so lures us from the Truth.
He gave thee back original night, His own
Tremendous canvas, large and blank and free,
Where at each thought a star flashed out and sang.
O blinded with a special lighting, thou
Hadst once again the virgin Dark! and when
The pleasant flowery sight, which had deterred
Thine eyes from seeing, when this recent world
Was quite withdrawn; then burst upon thy view
The elder glory; space again in pangs,
And Eden odorous in the early mist,
That heaving watery plain that *was* the world,
Then the burned earth, and Christ coming in clouds.
Or rather a special leave to thee was given
By the high power, and thou with bandaged eyes
Wast guided through the glimmering camp of God.
Thy hand was taken by angels who patrol
The evening, or are sentries to the dawn,
Or pace the wide air everlastingly.
Thou wast admitted to the presence, and deep
Argument heardest, and the large design
That brings this world out of the woe to bliss.

—STEPHEN PHILLIPS

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JOHN DRYDEN
1631-1700



JOHN DRYDEN

A SATIRE AGAINST WIT

'Tis true, that when the coarse and worthless dross
Is purg'd away, there will be mighty loss;
Ev'n Congreve, Southern, manly Wycherley,
When thus refin'd, will grievous sufferers be;
Into the melting pot when Dryden comes,
What horrid stench will rise, what noisome fumes!
How will he shrink, when all his lewd allay,
And wicked mixture, sh'll be purg'd away!

—SIR RICHARD BLACKMORE

(*From*)

AN ACCOUNT OF THE GREATEST ENGLISH POETS

But see where artful Dryden next appears
Grown old in rhyme, but charming ev'n in years.
Great Dryden next, whose tuneful muse affords
The sweetest numbers, and the fittest words.
Whether in comick sounds or tragick airs
She forms her voice, she moves our smiles or tears.
If satire or heroic strain she writes,
Her hero pleases, and her satire bites.
From her no harsh unartful numbers fall,
She wears all dresses, and she charms in all.
How might we fear our English poetry,
That long has flourish'd, shou'd decay with thee;
Did not the muses other hope appear,
Harmonious Congreve, and forbid our fear:
Congreve! whose fancy's unexhausted store
Has given already much, and promis'd more.
Congreve shall still preserve thy fame alive,
And Dryden's muse shall in his friend survive.

—JOSEPH ADDISON

TO MR. DRYDEN

How long, great poet, shall thy sacred lays
Provoke our wonder, and transcend our praise?
Can neither injuries of time, or age,
Damp thy poetick heat, and quench thy rage?
Not so thy Ovid in his exile wrote,
Grief chill'd his breast, and check'd his rising thought;
Pensive and sad, his drooping muse betrays
The Roman genius in its last decays.

Prevailing warmth has still thy mind possest,
And second youth is kindled in thy breast;
Thou mak'st the beauties of the Romans known,
And England boasts of riches not her own;
Thy lines have heighten'd Virgil's majesty,
And Horace wonders at himself in thee.
Thou teachest Persius to inform our isle
In smoother numbers, and a clearer stile;
And Juvenal, instructed in thy page,
Edges his satyr, and improves his rage.
Thy copy casts a fairer light on all,
And still outshines the bright original.

Now Ovid boasts the advantage of thy song,
And tells his story in the British tongue;
Thy charming verse, and fair translations, show
How thy own laurel first began to grow;
How wild Lycaon chang'd by angry gods,
And frighted at himself, ran howling through the woods.

O mayst thou still the noble task prolong,
Nor age, nor sickness interrupt thy song:
Then may we wondering read, how human limbs
Have water'd kingdoms, and dissolv'd in streams;
Of those rich fruits that on the fertile mould
Turn'd yellow by degrees, and ripen'd into gold:
How some in feathers, or a ragged hide,
Have liv'd a second life, and different natures try'd.
Then will thy Ovid, thus transform'd, reveal
A nobler change than he himself can tell.

(*From*)

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF THE SECOND BOOK
OF HORACE

Dryden taught to join
The varying verse, the full resounding line,
The long majestic march, and energy divine
Tho' still some traces of our rustic vein
And splay-foot verse remain'd, and will remain.

· · · · ·
E'en copious Dryden wanted, or forgot,
The last and greatest art—the art to blot.

—ALEXANDER POPE

(*From*)

MARMION

(INTRODUCTION TO CANTO FIRST)

The mightiest chiefs of British song
Scorn'd not such legends to prolong:
They gleam through Spenser's elfin dream,
And mix in Milton's heavenly theme;
And Dryden, in immortal strain,
Had raised the Table Round again,
But that a ribald King and Court
Bade him toil on, to make them sport;
Demanded for their niggard pay,
Fit for their souls, a looser lay,
Licentious satire, song, and play;
The world defrauded of the high design,
Profaned the God-given strength, and marr'd the
lofty line.

—WALTER SCOTT

(From)

THE VILLAGE CURATE

Then comes a bard,
Worn out and penniless, and poet still,
Though bent with years, and in impetuous rhyme
Pours out his unexhausted song. What muse
So flexible, so generous as thine,
Immortal Dryden! From her copious fount
Large draughts he took, and unbecoming song
Inebriated sang. Who does not grieve
To hear the foul and insolent rebuke
Of angry satire from a bard so rare,
To trace the lubricous and oily course
Of abject adulation, the lewd line
Of shameless vice from page to page, and find
The judgment bribed, the heart unprincipled,
And only loyal at the expense of truth,
Of justice, and of virtue?

—JAMES HURDIS

DRYDEN

Then Dryden came, a mind of giant mould,
Like the north wind, impetuous, keen, and cold;
Born to effect what Waller but essay'd,
In rank and file his numbers he array'd,
Compact as troops exact in battle's trade.
Firm by constraint, and regularly strong,
His vigorous lines resistless march along,
By martial music order'd and inspired,
Like glowing wheels by their own motion fired.
So as a nation long inured to arms,
And stirring strains, fierce pleasures, brisk alarms,
Disdains a calm, and can no longer bear
A soft, a pensive, or a solemn air;
Thus Dryden taught the English to despise
The simply sweet, long-lingering melodies
That lovely Spenser and his thoughtful peers

Had warbled erst to rapt attentive ears.
E'en Milton's billowy ocean of high sound,
Delighted little, though it might astound;
The restless crowd impatient turn'd away,
And sought a shorter, shriller, lighter lay.

Yet Dryden nobly earn'd the poet's name,
And won new honours from the gift of fame.
His life was long, and when his head was grey,
His fortune broken, and usurp'd his bay,
His dauntless genius own'd no cold dismay;
Nor in repining notes of vain regret
He made his crack'd pipe pitifully fret.
But when cashier'd and laid upon the shelf,
To shame the court excell'd his former self,
Who meant to clip, but imp'd his moulted wings,
And cured him of his ancient itch of praising kings.
He sat gigantic on the shore of time,
And watch'd the ingress of encroaching slime,
Nor dream'd how much of evil or of good
Might work amid the far unfathom'd flood.

—HARTLEY COLERIDGE

ALEXANDER POPE
1688-1744



ALEXANDER POPE

TO MR. POPE

1728

Three times I've read your Illiad o'er;
The first time pleas'd me well;
New beauties unobserv'd before,
Next pleas'd me better still.

Again I tri'd to find a flaw,
Examin'd ilka line;
The third time pleas'd me best of a',
The labour seem'd divine.

Henceforward I'll not tempt my fate,
On dazzling rays to stare,
Lest I should tine dear self-conceit,
And read and write nae mair.

—ALLAN RAMSAY

(*From*)

ON A MISCELLANY OF POEMS

When Pope's harmonious muse with pleasure roves,
Amidst the plains, the murm'ring streams and groves,
Attentive Echo, pleased to hear his songs,
Thro' the glad shade each warbling note prolongs;
His various numbers charm our ravish'd ears,
His steady judgment far out-shoots his years,
And early in youth the god appears.

—JOHN GAY

(*From*)

THE WANDERER

CANTO I

.Pope, the monarch of the tuneful train!
To whom be Nature's, and Britannia's praise!
All their bright honours rush into his lays!
And all that glorious warmth his lays reveal,

Which only poets, kings, and patriots feel!
Tho' gay as mirth, as curious though sedate,
As elegance polite, as pow'r elate;
Profound as reason, and as justice clear;
Soft as compassion, yet as truth severe;
As bounty copious, as persuasion sweet,
Like Nature various, and like Art complete;
So fine her morals, so sublime her views,
His life is almost equall'd by his Muse.

—RICHARD SAVAGE

LINES TO ALEXANDER POPE

While malice, Pope, denies thy page
Its own celestial fires;
While critics, and while bards in rage,
Admiring, won't admire:

While wayward pens thy worth assail,
And envious tongues decry;
These times, though many a friend bewail,
These times bewail not I.
But when the world's loud praise is thine,
And spleen no more shall blame:
When with thy Homer thou shalt shine
In one unclouded fame:

When none shall rail, and every lay
Devote a wreath to thee;
That day, (for come it will,) that day
Shall I lament to see.

—DAVID LEWIS

(*From*)

TABLE TALK

Then Pope, as harmony itself exact,
In verse well disciplined, complete, compact,

Gave virtue and morality a grace
That quite eclipsing pleasure's painted face,
Levied a tax of wonder and applause,
Even on the fools that trampled on their laws.
But he, (his musical finesse was such,
So nice his ear, so delicate his touch)
Made poetry a mere mechanic art,
And every warbler has his tune by heart.

—WILLIAM COWPER

TO MR. POPE

To move the springs of nature as we please,
To think with spirit, but to write with ease:
With living words to warm the conscious heart,
Or please the soul with nicer charms of art,
For this the Grecian soar'd in epic strains,
And softer Maro left the Mantuan plains:
Melodious Spenser felt the lover's fire,
And awful Milton strung his heavenly lyre.

'Tis yours, like these, with curious toil to trace
The powers of language, harmony, and grace,
How nature's self with living lustre shines;
How judgment strengthens, and how art refines;
How to grow bold with conscious sense of fame,
And force a pleasure which we dare not blame;
To charm us more through negligence than pains,
And give ev'n life and action to the strains:
Led by some law, whose powerful impulse guides
Each happy stroke, and in the soul presides:
Some fairer image of perfection, giv'n
To inspire mankind, itself deriv'd from Heav'n.

O ever worthy, ever crown'd with praise;
Bless'd in thy life, and bless'd in all thy lays!
Add, that the Sisters every thought refine:
Or ev'n thy life be faultless as thy line:
Yet envy still with fiercer rage pursues,
Obscures the virtue, and defames the muse,

A soul like thine, in pains, in grief resign'd,
Views with vain scorn the malice of mankind:
Not critics, but their planets prove unjust:
And are they blam'd who sin because they must?

Yet sure not so must all pursue thy lays;
I cannot rival—and yet dare to praise.
A thousand charms at once my thoughts engage,
Sappho's soft sweetness, Pindar's warmer rage,
Statius' free vigour, Virgil's studious care,
And Homer's force, and Ovid's easier air.

So seems some picture, where exact design,
And curious pains, and strength and sweetness join:
Where the free thought its pleasing grace bestows,
And each warm stroke with living colour glows:
Soft without weakness, without labour fair;
Wrought up at once with happiness and care!

How bless'd the man that from the world removes
To joys that Mordaunt, or his Pope approves;
Whose taste exact each author can explore,
And live the present and past ages o'er:
Who free from pride, from penitence, or strife,
Move calmly forward to the verge of life:
Such be my days, and such my fortunes be,
To live by reason, and to write by thee!

Nor deem this verse, though humble, thy disgrace:
All are not born the glory of their race:
Yet all are born to adore the great man's name,
And trace his footsteps in the paths to fame.

The Muse who now this early homage pays,
First learn'd from thee to animate her lays:
A muse as yet unhonour'd, but unstain'd,
Who prais'd no vices, no preferment gain'd:
Unbiass'd or to censure or commend,
Who knows no envy, and who grieves no friend;
Perhaps too fond to make those virtues known,
And fix her fame immortal on thy own.

—WALTER HARTE

EPISTLE TO MR. ALEXANDER POPE

From mortal Gratitude, decide, my Pope,
Have Wits Immortal more to fear or hope?
Wits toil and travail round the Plant of Fame,
Their Works its Garden, and its Growth their Aim,
Then Commentators, in unwieldy Dance,
Break down the Barriers of the trim Pleasance,
Pursue the Poet, like Actaeon's Hounds,
Beyond the fences of his Garden Grounds,
Rend from the singing Robes each borrowed Gem,
Rend from the laurel'd Brows the Diadem,
And, if one Rag of Character they spare,
Comes the Biographer, and strips it bare!

Such, Pope, has been thy Fortune, such thy Doom.
Swift the Ghouls gathered at the Poet's Tomb,
With Dust of Notes to clog each lordly Line,
Warburton, Warton, Croker, Bowles, combine!
Collecting Cackle, Johnson condescends
To *interview* the Drudges of your Friends.
Though still your Courthope holds your merits high,
And still proclaims your Poems *Poetry*,
Biographers, un-Boswell-like, have sneered,
And Dunces edit him whom Dunces feared!

They say; what say they? Not in vain You ask.
To tell you what they say, behold my Task!
'Methinks already I your Tears survey'
As I repeat 'the horrid Things they say.'*

Comes El—n first: I fancy you'll agree
Not frenzied Dennis smote so fell as he;
For El—n's Introduction, crabbed and dry,
Like Churchill's Cudgel's† marked with Lie, and Lie!

*Rape of the Lock.

†In Mr. Hogarth's Caricatura.

'Too dull to know what his own System meant,
 Pope yet was skilled new Treasons to invent;
 A Snake that puffed himself and stung his Friends,
 Few Lied so frequent, for such little Ends;
 His mind, like Flesh inflamed,* was raw and sore,
 And still, the more he writhed, he stung the more!
 Oft in a Quarrel, never in the Right,
 His Spirit sank when he was called to fight.
 Pope, in the Darkness mining like a Mole,
 Forged on Himself, as from Himself he stole,
 And what for Caryl once he feigned to feel,
 Transferred, in Letters never sent, to Steele!
 Still he denied the Letters he had writ,
 And still mistook Indecency for Wit.
 His very Grammar, so DeQuincey cries,
 "Detains the Reader, and at times defies!"

Fierce El—n thus: no Line escapes his Rage,
 And furious Foot-notes growl 'neath every Page:
 See St-ph-n next take up the woful Tale,
 Prolong the Preaching, and protract the Wail!
 'Some forage Falsehoods from the North and South,
 But Pope, poor D---l, lied from Hand to Mouth;†
 Affected, hypocritical, and vain,
 A Book in Breeches, and a Fop in Grain;
 A Fox that found not the high Clusters sour,
 The Fanfaron of Vice beyond his power,
 Pope yet possessed'—(the Praise will make you start)—
 'Mean, morbid, vain, he yet possessed a Heart!
 And still we marvel at the Man, and still
 Admire his Finish, and applaud his Skill:
 Though, as that fabled Barque, a phantom Form,
 Eternal strains, nor rounds the Cape of Storm,
 Even so Pope strove, nor ever crossed the Line
 That from the Noble separates the Fine!'

*Elwin's Pope, ii. 15.

†'Poor Pope was always a hand-to-mouth liar.' Pope, by Leslie Stephen, 139.

The Learned thus, and who can quite reply,
Reverse the Judgment, and Retort the Lie?
You reap, in armed Hates that haunt Your name,
Reap what you sowed, the Dragon's Teeth of Fame:
You could not write, and from unenvious Time
Expect the Wreath that crowns the lofty Rhyme,
You still must fight, retreat, attack, defend,
And oft, to snatch a Laurel, lose a Friend!

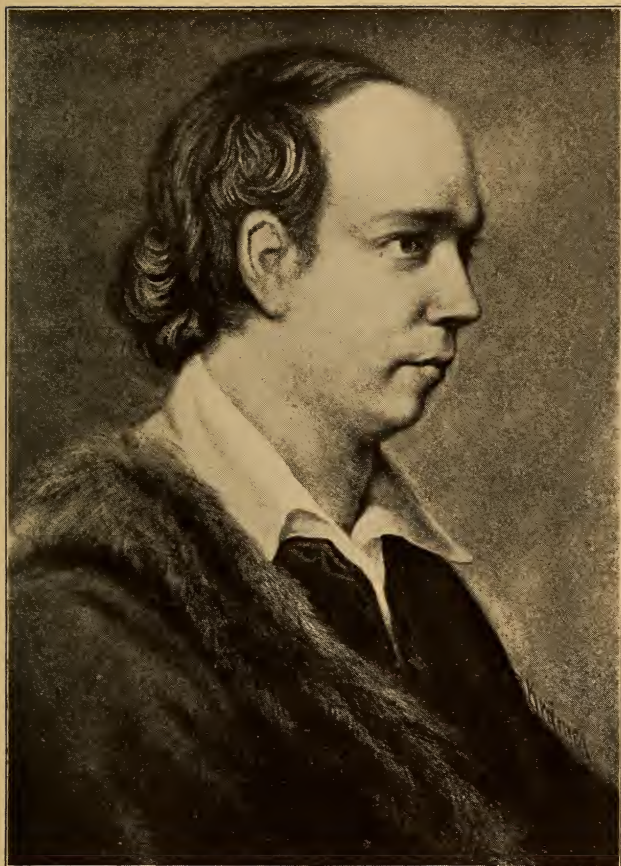
The Pity of it! And the changing Taste
Of changing Time leaves half your Work a Waste!
My Childhood fled your couplet's clarion tone,
And sought for Homer in the Prose of Bohn.
Still through the Dust of that dim Prose appears
The Flight of Arrows and the Sheen of Spears;
Still we may trace what Hearts heroic feel,
And hear the Bronze that hurtles on the Steel!
But, ah, your Iliad seems half-pretence,
Where Wits, not Heroes, prove their Skill in Fence,
And great Achilles' Eloquence doth show
As if no Centaur trained him, but Boileau!

Again, your Verse is orderly,—and more,—
'The Waves behind impel the Waves before;'
Monotonously musical they glide,
Till Couplet unto Couplet hath replied.
But turn to Homer! How his Verses sweep!
Surge answers Surge and Deep doth call on Deep;
This Line in Foam and Thunder issues forth,
Spurred by the West or smitten by the North,
Sombre in all its sullen Deeps, and all
Clear at the Crest, and foaming to the Fall,
The next with silver Murmur dies away,
Like Tides that falter to Calypso's Bay!
Thus Time, with sordid Alchemy and dread,
Turns half the Glory of your Gold to Lead;
Thus Time,—at Ronsard's wreath that vainly bit,—
Has marred the Poet to preserve the Wit,

Who almost left on Addison a stain,
Whose knife cut cleanest with a poisoned pain,—
Yet Thou (strange Fate that clings to all of Thine!)
When most a Wit dost most a Poet shine.
In Poetry thy Dunciad expires,
When Wit has shot 'her momentary Fires.'
'T is Tragedy that watches by the Bed
'Where tawdry Yellow strove with dirty Red,'
And Men, remembering all, can scarce deny
To lay the Laurel where thine Ashes lie!

—ANDREW LANG

OLIVER GOLDSMITH
1728-1774



OLIVER GOLDSMITH

JUPITER AND MERCURY

A FABLE

Here Hermes, says Jove who with nectar was mellow,
Go fetch me some clay—I will make an odd fellow:
Right and wrong shall be jumbled—much gold and some
dross;

Without cause be he pleas'd, without cause be he cross;
Be sure as I work to throw in contradictions,
A great love of truth; yet a mind turn'd to fictions;
Now mix these ingredients, which warm'd in the baking,
Turn to learning, and gaming, religion and raking.
With the love of a wench, let his writings be chaste;
Tip his tongue with strange matter, his pen with fine
taste;

That the rake and the poet o'er all may prevail,
Set fire to the head, and set fire to the tail:
For the joy of each sex, on the world I'll bestow it:
This Scholar, Rake, Christian, Dupe, Gamester and Poet,
Thro' a mixture so odd, he shall merit great fame,
And among brother mortals—be GOLDSMITH his name!
When on earth this strange meteor no more shall appear,
You, Hermes, shall fetch him—to make us sport here!
—DAVID GARRICK

(*From*)

THE STREATHAM PORTRAITS

From our Goldsmith's anomalous character, who
Can withhold his contempt, and his reverence too?
From a poet so polished, so paltry a fellow!
From critic, historian, or vile Punchinello!
From a heart in which meanness had made her abode,
From a foot that each path of vulgarity trod;
From a head to invent and a hand to adorn,
Unskilled in the schools, a philosopher born.
By disguise undefended, by jealousy smit,

This *lusus naturae* nondescript in wit,
May best be compared to those Anamorphoses;
Which for lectures to ladies th' optician proposes;
All deformity seeming, in some points of view,
In others quite accurate, regular, true:
Till the student no more sees the figure that shocked her,
But all in his likeness,—our odd little doctor.

—HESTER LYNCH PIOZZI

(*From*)

ERIN

Forgettest thou thy bard, who hurried home
From distant lands and, bent by poverty,
Reposed among the quiet scenes he loved
In native Auburn, nor disdain'd to join
The village dancers on the sanded floor?
No poet since hath Nature drawn so close
To her pure bosom as her Oliver.

—WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

(*From*)

YOUNG AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

But gentler GOLDSMITH, whom no man could hate,
Beloved by Heaven, pursued by wayward fate,
Whose verse shall live in every British mind,
Though sweet, yet strong; though nervous, yet refined;—
A motley part he play'd in life's gay scene,
The dupe of vanity and wayward spleen;
Aping the world, a strange fantastic elf;
Great, generous, noble, when he was himself.

—HARTLEY COLERIDGE

GOLDSMITH'S WHISTLE

As fabled beasts before the lyre
Fell prone, so want and hunger fled;
The way was free to his desire,
And he like one with manna fed.
The world, the world, for him was meant;
Cathedral towers, and Alpine torrents!
He trod a measure as he went,
And piped and sang his way to Florence!
Great wit and scholar though he be,
I love, of all his famous days,
This time of simple vagrancy
Ere youth and bliss had parted ways.
With what a careless heart he strayed,
Light as the down upon a thistle,
Made other hearts his own, and paid
His way through Europe with a whistle!

—HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD

WILLIAM COWPER
1731-1800



WILLIAM COWPER

IN MEMORY OF WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.

BORN IN HERTFORDSHIRE, 1731

BURIED IN THIS CHURCH, 1800

Ye, who with warmth the public triumph feel
Of talents, dignified by sacred zeal,
Here, to devotion's Bard devoutly just,
Pay your fond tribute due to Cowper's dust!
England, exulting in his spotless fame,
Ranks with her dearest sons his fav'rite name;
Sense, fancy, wit, suffice not all to raise
So clear a title to affection's praise:
His highest honors to the heart belong;
His virtues form'd the magic of his song.

—WILLIAM HAYLEY

(*From*)

THE PURSUITS OF LITERATURE

With England's Bard, with Cowper who shall vie?
Original in strength and dignity,
With more than painter's fancy blest, with lays
Holy, as saints to heav'n expiring raise.

—THOMAS JAMES MATHIAS

THE HARP, AND DESPAIR, OF COWPER

Sweet bard, whose tones great Milton might approve,
And Shakespeare, from high Fancy's sphere,
Turning to the sound his ear,
Bend down a look of sympathy and love;
Oh, swell the lyre again,
As if in full accord it poured an angel's strain!
But oh! what means that look aghast,
Ev'n whilst it seemed in holy trance,
On scenes of bliss above to glance!

Was it a fiend of darkness passed!

Oh, speak—

Paleness is upon his cheek—

On his brow the big drops stand,

To airy vacancy

Points the dread silence of his eye,

And the loved lyre it falls, falls from his nerveless hand!

Come, peace of mind, delightful guest!

Oh, come, and make thy downy nest

Once more on this sad heart!

Meek Faith, a drop of comfort shed;

Sweet Hope, support his aged head;

And Charity, avert the burning dart!

Fruitless the prayer—the night of deeper woes

Seems o'er the head even now to close;

In vain the path of purity he trod,

In vain, in vain,

He poured from Fancy's shell his sweetest hermit strain—

He has no hope on earth: forsake him not, O God!

—WILLIAM LISLE BOWLES

(*From*)

LAST FRUIT OFF AN OLD TREE

CCVIII

Tenderest of tender hearts, of spirits pure
The purest! such, O Cowper! such wert thou,
But such are not the happiest: thou wert not,
Till borne where all those hearts and spirits rest.
Young was I, when from Latin lore and Greek
I played the truant for thy sweeter Task,
Nor since that hour hath aught our Muses held
Before me seem'd so precious; in one hour,
I saw the poet and the sage unite,
More grave than man, more versatile than boy!

—WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

COWPER'S GRAVE

I

It is a place where poets crowned may feel the heart's
decaying;
It is a place where happy saints may weep amid their
praying:
Yet let the grief and humbleness as low as silence languish:
Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she gave
her anguish.

II

O poets, from a maniac's tongue was poured the deathless
singing!
O Christians, at your cross of hope a hopeless hand was
clinging!
O men, this man in brotherhood your weary paths be-
guiling,
Groaned inly while he taught you peace, and died while ye
were smiling!

III

And now, what time ye all may read through dimming
tears his story,
How discord on the music fell, and darkness on the glory,
And how when, one by one, sweet sounds and wandering
lights departed,
He wore no less a loving face because so broken-hearted,

IV

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adoration;
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good forsaken,
Named softly as the household name of one whom God
hath taken.

V

With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn to think upon
him,
With meekness that is gratefulness to God whose heaven
hath won him,
Who suffered once the madness-cloud to His own love to
blind him;
But gently led the blind along where breath and bird could
find him,

VI

And wrought within his shattered brain such quick poetic
senses
As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious in-
fluences:
The pulse of dew upon the grass kept his within its number,
And silent shadows from the trees refreshed him like a
slumber.

VII

Wild, timid hares were drawn from woods to share his
home-caresses,
Uplooking to his human eyes with sylvan tendernesses:
The very world, by God's constraint, from falsehood's
ways removing,
Its women and its men became, beside him, true and
loving.

VIII

And though, in blindness, he remained unconscious of
that guiding,
And things provided came without the sweet sense of
providing,
He testified this solemn truth, while frenzy desolated,
—Nor man nor nature satisfies whom only God created.

IX

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother while she
blesses,
And drops upon his burning brow the coolness of her kisses;
That turns his fevered eyes around—"My mother! where's
my mother?"
As if such tender word and deeds could come from any
other!—

X

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he sees her bending
o'er him,
Her face all pale from watchful love,—the unwearied love
she bore him!—
Thus woke the poet from the dream his life's long fever
gave him,
Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes which closed in death to
save him.

XI

Thus? oh, not *thus!* no type of earth can image that
awaking
Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs round him
breaking,
Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body parted,
But felt those eyes alone, and knew, —"*My Saviour! not
deserted!*"

XII

Deserted! Who hath dreamt, that when the cross in
darkness rested,
Upon the victim's hidden face no love was manifested?
What frantic hands outstretched have e'er the atoning
drops averted?
What tears have washed them from the soul, that *one*
should be deserted?

XIII

Deserted! God could separate from his own essence rather;
And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous Son
and Father:

Yea, once Immanuel's orphaned cry his universe hath
shaken—

It went up single, echoless, "My God, I am forsaken!"

XIV

It went up from the Holy's lips amid his lost creation,
That of the lost no son should use those words of desola-
tion;

That earth's worst frenzies, marring hope, should mar not
hope's fruition;

And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture in a
vision.

—ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

TO COWPER

Sweet are thy strains, Celestial Bard;
And oft, in childhood's years,
I've read them o'er and o'er again,
With floods of silent tears.

The language of my inmost heart
I traced in every line;
My sins, *my* sorrows, hopes, and fears,
Were there—and only mine.

All for myself the sigh would swell,
The tear of anguish start;
I little knew what wilder woe
Had filled the Poet's heart.

I did not know the nights of gloom,
The days of misery:

The long, long years of dark despair,
That crushed and tortured thee.

But they are gone; from earth at length
Thy gentle soul is pass'd,
And in the bosom of its God
Has found its home at last.

It must be so, if God is love,
And answers fervent prayer;
Then surely thou shalt dwell on high,
And I may meet thee there.

Is He the source of every good,
The spring of purity?
Then in thine hours of deepest woe,
Thy God was still with thee.

How else, when every hope was fled,
Could thou so fondly cling
To holy things and holy men?
And how so sweetly sing

Of things that God alone could teach?
And whence that purity,
That hatred of all sinful ways—
That gentle charity?

Are *these* the symptoms of a heart
Of heavenly grace bereft—
Forever banished from its God,
To Satan's fury left?

Yet, should thy darkest fears be true,
If Heaven be so severe,
That such a soul as thine is lost,—
Oh! how shall *I* appear?

—ANNE BRONTE

ROBERT BURNS
1759-1796



ROBERT BURNS

A BARD'S EPITAPH

Is there a whim-inspired fool,
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool,
 Let him draw near;
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
 And drap a tear.

Is there a bard of rustic song,
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
That weekly this area throng,
 O, pass not by!
But, with a frater-feeling strong,
 Here heave a sigh.

Is there a man whose judgment clear,
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career,
 Wild as the wave;
Here pause—and, thro' the starting tear,
 Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow,
 And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
 And stain'd his name!

Reader, attend! whether thy soul
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,
 In low pursuit;
Know prudent cautious self-control
 Is wisdom's root.

—ROBERT BURNS

AT THE GRAVE OF BURNS

SEVEN YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH

I shiver, Spirit fierce and bold,
At thought of what I now behold:
As vapours breathed from dungeons cold
Strike pleasure dead,
So sadness comes from out the mould
Where Burns is laid.

And have I then thy bones so near,
And thou forbidden to appear?
As if it were thyself that's here
I shrink with pain;
And both my wishes and my fear
Alike are vain.

Off weight—nor press on weight!—away
Dark thoughts!—they came, but not to stay;
With chastened feelings would I pay
The tribute due
To him, and aught that hides his clay
From mortal view.

Fresh as the flower, whose modest worth
He sang, his genius “glinted” forth,
Rose like a star that touching earth,
For so it seems,
Doth glorify its humble birth
With matchless beams.

The piercing eye, the thoughtful brow,
The struggling heart, where be they now?—
Full soon the Aspirant of the plough,
The prompt, the brave,
Slept, with the obscurest, in the low
And silent grave.

I mourned with thousands, but as one
More deeply grieved, for He was gone
Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
And showed my youth
How Verse may build a princely throne
On humble truth.

Alas! where'er the current tends,
Regret pursues and with it blends,—
Huge Criffel's hoary top ascends
By Skiddaw seen,—
Neighbours we were, and loving friends
We might have been;

True friends though diversely inclined;
But heart with heart and mind with mind,
Where the main fibres are entwined,
Through Nature's skill,
May even by contraries be joined
More closely still.

The tear will start, and let it flow;
Thou "poor Inhabitant below,"
At this dread moment—even so—
Might we together
Have sate and talked where gowans blow,
Or on wild heather.

What treasures would have then been placed
Within my reach; of knowledge graced
By fancy what a rich repast!
But why go on?—
Oh! spare to sweep, thou mournful blast,
His grave grass-grown. .

There, too, a Son, his joy and pride,
(Not three weeks past the Stripling died,)
Lies gathered to his Father's side,

Soul-moving sight!
Yet one to which is not denied
Some sad delight.

For *he* is safe, a quiet bed
Hath early found among the dead,
Harboured where none can be misled,
 Wronged, or distrest;
And surely here it may be said
 That such are blest.

And oh for Thee, by pitying grace
Checked oft-times in a devious race,
May He who halloweth the place
 Where Man is laid,
Receive thy Spirit in the embrace
 For which it prayed!

Sighing I turned away; but ere
Night fell I heard, or seemed to hear,
Music that sorrow comes not near,
 A ritual hymn,
Chanted in love that casts out fear
 By Seraphim.

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

THOUGHTS

SUGGESTED THE DAY FOLLOWING, ON THE BANKS OF NITH,
NEAR THE POET'S RESIDENCE

Too frail to keep the lofty vow
That must have followed when his brow
Was wreathed—"The Vision" tells us how—
 With holly spray,
He faltered, drifted to and fro,
 And passed away.

Well might such thoughts, dear Sister, throng
Our minds when, lingering all too long,
Over the grave of Burns we hung
 In social grief—
Indulged as if it were a wrong
 To seek relief.

But, leaving each unquiet theme
Where gentlest judgments may misdeem,
And prompt to welcome every gleam
 Of good and fair,
Let us beside this limpid Stream
 Breathe hopeful air.

Enough of sorrow, wreck, and blight;
Think rather of those moments bright
When to the consciousness of right
 His course was true,
When Wisdom prospered in his sight
 And virtue grew.

Yes, freely let our hearts expand,
Freely as in youth's season bland,
When side by side, his Book in hand,
 We wont to stray,
Our pleasure varying at comand
 Of each sweet Lay.

How oft inspired must he have trod
These pathways, yon far-stretching road!
There lurks his home; in that Abode,
 With mirth elate,
Or in his nobly-pensive mood,
 The Rustic sate.

Proud thoughts that Image overawes,
Before it humbly let us pause,
And ask of Nature, from what cause

And by what rules
She trained her Burns to win applause
That shames the Schools.

Through busiest street and loneliest glen
Are felt the flashes of his pen;
He rules 'mid winter snows, and when
Bees fill their hives;
Deep in the general heart of men
His power survives.

What need of fields in some far clime
Where Heroes, Sages, Bards sublime,
And all that fetched the flowing rhyme
From genuine springs,
Shall dwell together till old Time
Folds up his wings?

Sweet Mercy! to the gates of Heaven
This Minstrel lead, his sins forgiven;
The rueful conflict, the heart riven
With vain endeavour,
And memory of Earth's bitter leaven,
Effaced for ever.

But why to Him confine the prayer,
When kindred thoughts and yearnings bear
On the frail heart the purest share
With all that live?—
The best of what we do and are,
Just God, forgive!

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

ROBERT BURNS

What bird, in beauty, flight, or song,
Can with the Bard compare,
Who sang as sweet, and soar'd as strong,
As ever child of air?

His plume, his note, his form, could BURNS
For whim or pleasure change;
He was not one, but all by turns,
With transmigration strange.

The Blackbird, oracle of spring,
When flow'd his moral lay;
The Swallow wheeling on the wing,
Capriciously at play:

The Humming-bird, from bloom to bloom,
Inhaling heavenly balm;
The Raven, in the tempest's gloom;
The Halcyon, in the calm:

In "auld Kirk Alloway," the Owl,
At witching time of night;
By "bonnie Doon," the earliest Fowl
That caroll'd to the light.

He was the Wren amidst the grove,
When in his homely vein;
At Bannockburn the Bird of Jove,
With thunder in his train:

The Woodlark, in his mournful hours;
The Goldfinch, in his mirth;
The Thrush, a spendthrift of his powers,
Enrapturing heaven and earth;

The Swan, in majesty and grace,
Contemplative and still:
But roused,—no Falcon, in the chase,
Could like his satire kill.

The Linnet in simplicity,
In tenderness the Dove;
But more than all beside was he
The Nightingale in love.

Oh! had he never stoop'd to shame,
Nor lent a charm to vice,
How had Devotion loved to name
That Bird of Paradise!

Peace to the dead!— in Scotia's choir
Of Minstrels great and small,
He sprang from his spontaneous fire,
The Phoenix of them all.

—JAMES MONTGOMERY

WRITTEN IN BURNS' COTTAGE

This mortal body of a thousand days
Now fills, O Burns, a space in thine own room,
Where thou didst dream alone on budded bays,
Happy and thoughtless of thy day of doom!
My pulse is warm with thine own Barley-bree,
My head is light with pledging a great soul,
My eyes are wandering, and I cannot see,
Fancy is dead and drunken at its goal;
Yet can I stamp my foot upon thy floor,
Yet can I ope thy window-sash to find
The meadow thou hast tramped o'er and o'er,—
Yet can I think of thee till thought is blind,—
Yet can I gulp a bumper to thy name,—
O smile among the shades, for this is fame!

—JOHN KEATS

ROBERT BURNS*

I see amid the fields of Ayr
A ploughman, who, in foul and fair,
Sings at his task
So clear, we know not if it is
The laverock's song we hear, or his,
Nor care to ask.

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For him the ploughing of those fields
A more ethereal harvest yields
 Than sheaves of grain;
Songs flush with purple bloom the rye,
The plover's call, the curlew's cry,
 Sing in his brain.

Touched by his hand, the wayside weed
Becomes a flower; the lowliest reed
 Beside the stream
Is clothed with beauty; gorse and grass
And heather, where his footsteps pass,
 The brighter seem.

He sings of love, whose flame illumines
The darkness of lone cottage rooms;
 He feels the force,
The treacherous undertow and stress
Of wayward passions, and no less
 The keen remorse.

At moments, wrestling with his fate,
His voice is harsh, but not with hate;
 The brush-wood, hung
Above the tavern door, lets fall
Its bitter leaf, its drop of gall
 Upon his tongue.

But still the music of his song
Rises o'er all, elate and strong;
 Its master-chords
Are Manhood, Freedom, Brotherhood,
Its discords but an interlude
 Between the words.

And then to die so young and leave
Unfinished what he might achieve!
 Yet better sure

Is this, than wandering up and down,
An old man in a country town,
Infirm and poor.

For now he haunts his native land
As an immortal youth; his hand
Guides every plough;
He sits beside each ingle-nook,
His voice is in each rushing brook,
Each rustling bough.

His presence haunts this room to-night,
A form of mingled mist and light
From that far coast.
Welcome beneath this roof of mine!
Welcome! this vacant chair is thine,
Dear guest and ghost!

—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

BURNS

ON RECEIVING A SPRIG OF HEATHER IN BLOSSOM

No more these simple flowers belong
To Scottish maid and lover;
Sown in the common soil of song,
They bloom the wide world over.

In smiles and tears, in sun and showers,
The minstrel and the heather,
The deathless singer and the flowers
He sang of live together.

Wild heather-bells and Robert Burns!
The moorland flower and peasant!
How, at their mention, memory turns
Her pages old and pleasant!

The gray sky wears again its gold
And purple of adorning,
And manhood's noonday shadows hold
The dews of boyhood's morning.

The dews that washed the dust and soil
From off the wings of pleasure,
The sky, that flecked the ground of toil
With golden threads of leisure.

I call to mind the summer day,
The early harvest mowing,
The sky with sun and clouds at play,
And flowers with breezes blowing.

I hear the blackbird in the corn,
The locust in the haying;
And, like the fabled hunter's horn,
Old tunes my heart is playing.

How oft that day, with fond delay,
I sought the maple's shadow,
And sang with Burns the hours away,
Forgetful of the meadow!

Bees hummed, birds twittered, overhead
I heard the squirrels leaping,
The good dog listened while I read,
And wagged his tail in keeping.

I watched him while in sportive mood
I read "*The two Dogs*" story,
And half believed he understood
The poet's allegory.

Sweet day, sweet songs! The golden hours
Grew brighter for that singing,
From brook and bird and meadow flowers
A dearer welcome bringing.

New light on home-seen Nature beamed,
New glory over Woman;
And daily life and duty seemed
No longer poor and common.

I woke to find the simple truth
Of fact and feeling better
Than all the dreams that held my youth
A still repining debtor:

That Nature gives her handmaid, Art,
The themes of sweet discoursing;
The tender idyls of the heart
In every tongue rehearsing.

Why dream of lands of gold and pearl,
Of loving knight and lady,
When farmer boy and barefoot girl
Were wandering there already?

I saw through all familiar things
The romance underlying;
The joys and griefs that plume the wings
Of Fancy skyward flying.

I saw the same blithe day return,
The same sweet fall of even,
That rose on wooded Craigie-burn,
And sank on crystal Devon.

I matched with Scotland's heathery hills
The sweetbrier and the clover;
With Ayr and Doon, my native rills,
Their wood hymns chanting over.

O'er rank and pomp, as he had seen,
I saw the Man uprising;
No longer common or unclean,
The child of God's baptizing!

With clearer eyes I saw the worth
Of life among the lowly;
The Bible at his Cotter's hearth
Had made my own more holy.

And if at times an evil strain,
To lawless love appealing,
Broke in upon the sweet refrain
Of pure and healthful feeling,

It died upon the eye and ear,
No inward answer gaining;
No heart had I to see or hear
The discord and the staining.

Let those who never erred forget
His worth, in vain bewailings;
Sweet Soul of Song! I own my debt
Uncancelled by his failings!

Lament who will the ribald line
Which tells his lapse from duty,
How kissed the maddening lips of wine
Or wanton ones of beauty;

But think, while falls that shade between
The erring one and Heaven,
That he who loved like Magdalen,
Like her may be forgiven.

Not his the song whose thunderous chime
Eternal echoes render;
The mournful Tuscan's haunted rhyme,
And Milton's starry splendor!

But who his human heart has laid
To Nature's bosom nearer?
Who sweetened toil like him, or paid
To love a tribute dearer?

Through all his tuneful art, how strong
The human feeling gushes!
The very moonlight of his song
Is warm with smiles and blushes!

Give lettered pomp to teeth of Time,
So "Bonnie Doon" but tarry;
Blot out the Epic's stately rhyme,
But spare his Highland Mary!

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

FOR THE BURNS CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

His birthday.—Nay, we need not speak
The name each heart is beating,—
Each glistening eye and flushing cheek
In light and flame repeating!

We come in one tumultuous tide,—
One surge of wild emotion,—
As crowding through the Frith of Clyde
Rolls in the Western Ocean;

As when yon cloudless, quartered moon
Hangs o'er each storied river,
The swelling breasts of Ayr and Dono
With sea-green wavelets quiver.

The century shrivels like a scroll,—
The past becomes the present,—
And face to face, and soul to soul,
We greet the monarch-peasant.

While Shenstone strained in feeble flights
With Corydon and Phillis,—
While Wolfe was climbing Abraham's heights
To snatch the Bourbon lilies,—

Who heard the wailing infant's cry,
The babe beneath the sheeling,
Whose song to-night in every sky
Will shake earth's starry ceiling,—

Whose passion-breathing voice ascends
And floats like incense o'er us,
Whose ringing lay of friendship blends
With labors anvil chorus?

We love him, not for sweetest song,
Though never tone so tender;
We love him, even in his wrong,—
His wasteful self-surrender.

We praise him, not for gifts divine,—
His Muse was born of woman,—
His manhood breathes in every line,—
Was ever heart more human?

We love him, praise him, just for this:
In every form and feature,
Through wealth and want, through woe and
bliss,
He saw his fellow-creature!

No soul could sink beneath his love,—
Not even angel blasted;
No mortal power could soar above
The pride that all outlasted!

Ay! Heaven had set one living man
Beyond the pedant's tether,—
His virtues, frailties, He may scan,
Who weighs them all together!

I fling my pebble on the cairn
Of him, though dead, undying;

Sweet Nature's nursling, bonniest bairn
Beneath her daisies lying.

The waning suns, the wasting globe,
Shall spare the minstrel's story,—
The centuries weave his purple robe,
The mountain-mist of glory!

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

TO BURNS'S 'HIGHLAND MARY'

O loved by him whom Scotland loves,
Long loved, and honoured duly
By all who love the bard who sang
So sweetly and so truly!
In cultured dales his song prevails;
Thrills o'er the eagle's aery—
Has any caught that strain, nor sighed
For Burns's 'Highland Mary'?

I wandered on from hill to hill,
I feared nor wind nor weather,
For Burns beside me trode the moor,
Beside me pressed the heather.
I read his verse: his life—alas!
O'er that dark shades extended:—
With thee at last, and him in thee,
My thoughts their wanderings ended.

His golden hours of youth were thine;
Those hours whose flight is fleetest
Of all his songs to thee he gave
The freshest and the sweetest.
Ere ripe the fruit one branch he brake,
All rich with bloom and blossom;

And shook its dew, its incense shook,
Above thy brow and bosom.

And when his Spring, alas, how soon!
Had vanished, self-subverted,
His Summer, like a god repulsed,
Had from his gates departed;
Beneath that evening star, once more,
Star of his morn and even!
To thee his suppliant hands he spread,
And hailed his love 'in heaven.'

And if his spirit in 'a waste
Of shame' too oft was squandered,
And if too oft his feet ill-starred
In ways erroneous wandered;
Yet still his spirit's spirit bathed
In purity eternal;
And all fair things through thee retained
For him their aspect vernal.
Nor less that tenderness remained
Thy favouring love implanted;
Compunctious pity, yearnings vague
For love to earth not granted;
Reserve with freedom, female grace
Well matched with manly vigor,
In songs where fancy twined her wreaths
Round judgment's stalwart rigour.

A mute but strong appeal was made
To him by feeblest creatures:
In his large heart had each a part
That part had found in Nature's.
The wildered sheep, sagacious dog,
Old horse reduced and crazy;
The field-mouse by the plough upturned,
And violated daisy.

In him there burned that passionate glow
All Nature's soul and savour,
Which gives its hue to every flower,
To every fruit its flavour:
Nor less the kindred power he felt;
That love of all things human
Whereof the fiery centre is
That love man bears to woman.

He sang the dignity of man,
Sang woman's grace and goodness;
Passed by the world's half-truths; her lies
Pierced through with lance-like shrewdness:
Upon life's broad highways he stood,
And aped nor Greek nor Roman;
But snatched from heaven Promethean fire
To glorify things common.

He sang of youth, he sang of age,
Their joys, their griefs, their labours
Felt with, not for, the people; hailed
All Scotland's sons his neighbors:
And therefore all repeat his verse,
Hot youth, or graybeard steady,
The boatman on Loch Etive's wave,
The shepherd on Ben Ledi.

He sang from love of song; his name
Dunedin's cliff resounded:
He left her, faithful to a fame
On truth and nature founded:
He sought true fame, not loud acclaim;
Himself and Time he trusted:
For laurels crackling in the flame
His fine ear never lusted.

He loved, and reason had to love
The illustrious land that bore him:

Where'er he went, like heaven's broad tent
A star-bright Past hung o'er him:
Each isle had fenced a saint recluse,
Each tower a hero dying;
Down every mountain-gorge had rolled
The flood of foemen flying.

From age to age that land had paid
No alien throne submission;
For feudal faith had been her Law,
And freedom her Tradition.
Where frowned the rocks had Freedom smiled,
Sung 'mid the shrill wind's whistle—
So England prized her garden Rose,
But Scotland loved her Thistle.

Fair field alone the brave demand,
And Scotland ne'er had lost it;
And honest prove the hate and love
To objects meet adjusted:
Her will and way had ne'er been crossed
In fatal contradiction;
Nor loyalty to treason soured,
Nor faith abused with fiction.

Can song be false where hearts are sound?
Weak doubts, away we fling them!
The land that breeds great men, great deeds,
Shall ne'er lack bards to sing them:
That vigour, sense, and mutual truth
Which baffled each invader,
Shall fill her marts, and feed her arts,
While peaceful olives shade her.

Honour to Scotland and to Burns!
In him she stands collected:
A thousand streams one river make—
Thus Genius, heaven-directed,

Conjoins all separate veins of power
In one great soul-creation;
Thus blends a million men to make
The poet of the nation.

Be green for aye, green bank and brae
Around Montgomery's Castle!
Blow there, ye earliest flowers! and there,
Ye sweetest song-birds, nestle!
For there was ta'en that last farewell
In hope, indulged how blindly;
And there was given that long last gaze
'That dwelt' on him 'sae kindly.'

No word of thine recorded stands;
Few words that hour were spoken:
Two Bibles there were interchanged;
And some slight love-gift broken:
And there thy cold faint hands he pressed,
Thy head by dew-drops misted;
And kisses, ill-resisted first,
At last were unresisted.

Ah cease!—she died. He too is dead.
Of all her girlish graces
Perhaps one nameless lock remains:
The rest stern Time effaces—
Dust lost in dust. Not so: a bloom
Is hers that ne'er can wither;
And in that lay which lives for aye
The twain live on together.

—AUBREY DE VERE

BURNS: AN ODE

A fire of fierce and laughing light
That clove the shuddering heart of night
Leapt earthward, and the thunder's might
That pants and yearns
Made fitful music round its flight:
And earth saw Burns.

The joyous lightning found its voice
And bade the heart of wrath rejoice
And scorn uplift a song to voice
The imperial hate
That smote the God of base men's choice
At God's own gate.

Before the shrine of dawn, where through
The lark rang rapture as she flew,
It flashed and fired the darkling dew:
And all that heard
With love or loathing hailed anew
A new day's word.

The servants of the lord of hell,
As though their lord had blessed them, fell
Foaming at mouth for fear, so well
They knew the lie
Wherewith they sought to scan and spell
The unsounded sky.

And Calvin, night's prophetic bird,
Out of his home in hell was heard
Shrieking; and all the fens were stirred
Whence plague is bred;
Can God endure the scoffer's word?
But God was dead.

The God they made them in despite
Of man and woman, love and light,

Strong sundawn and the starry night,
The lie supreme,
Shot through with song, stood forth to sight
A devil's dream.

And he that bent the lyric bow
And laid the lord of darkness low
And bade the fire of laughter glow
Across his grave,
And bade the tides above it flow,
Wave hurtling wave,

Shall he not win from latter days
More than his own could yield of praise?
Ay, could the soveriegn singer's bays
Forsake his brow,
The warrior's, won on stormier ways,
Still clasp it now.

He loved, and sang of love: he laughed,
And bade the cup whereout he quaffed
Shine as a planet, fore and aft,
And left and right,
And keen as shoots the sun's first shaft
Against the night.

But love and wine were moon and sun
For many a fame long since undone,
And sorrow and joy have lost and won
By stormy turns
As many a singer's soul, if none
More bright than Burns.

And sweeter far in grief or mirth
Have songs as glad and sad of birth
Found voice to speak of wealth or dearth
In joy of life:
But never song took fire from earth
More strong for strife.

The daisy by his ploughshare cleft,
The lips of women loved and left,
The griefs and joys that weave the weft
Of human time,
With craftsman's cunning, keen and deft,
He carved in rhyme.

But Chaucer's daisy shines a star
Above his ploughshare's reach to mar,
And mightier vision gave Dunbar
More strenuous wing
To hear around all sins that are
Hell dance and sing.

And when such pride and power of trust
In song's high gift to arouse from dust
Death, and transfigure love or lust
Through smiles or tears
In golden speech that takes no rust
From cankering years,

As never spake but once in one
Strong star-crossed child of earth and sun,
Villon, made music such as none
May praise or blame,
A crown of starrier flower was won
Than Burns may claim.

But never, since bright earth was born
In rapture of the enkindling morn,
Might godlike wrath and sunlike scorn
That was and is
And shall be while false weeds are worn
Find word like his.

Above the rude and radiant earth
That heaves and glows from firth to firth
In vale and mountain, bright in dearth
And warm in wealth,

Which gave his fiery glory birth
By chance and stealth,

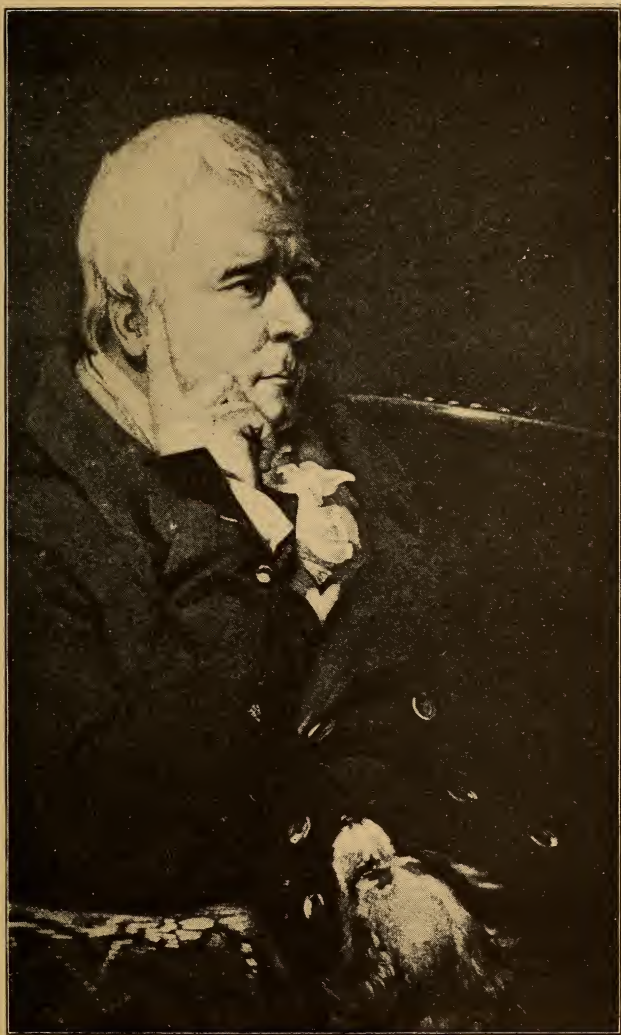
Above the storms of praise and blame
That blur with mist his lustrous name,
His thundrous laughter went and came,
And lives and flies;
The roar that follows on the flame
When lightning dies.

Earth, and the snow-dimmed heights of air,
And water winding soft and fair
Through still sweet places, bright and bare,
By bent and byre,
Taught him what hearts within them were:
But his was fire.

—ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

SIR WALTER SCOTT

1771—1832



SIR WALTER SCOTT

TO SIR WALTER SCOTT

ON ACCIDENTALLY MEETING AND PARTING WITH SIR
WALTER SCOTT IN LONDON, MAY, 1828

Since last I saw that countenance so mild
Slow-stealing age, and a faint line of care,
Had gently touched, methought, some features there;
Yet looked the man as placid as a child,
And the same voice,—whilst mingled with the throng,
Unknowing, and unknown, we passed along,—
That voice, a share of the brief time beguiled!
That voice I ne'er may hear again, I sighed
At parting,—whereso'er our various way,
In this great world,—but from the banks of Tweed,
As slowly sink the shades of eventide,
Oh! I shall hear the music of his reed,
Far off, and thinking of that voice, shall say,
A blessing rest upon thy locks of grey!

—WILLIAM LISLE BOWLES

(*From*)

THE QUEEN'S WAKE

(CONCLUSION)

The day arrived—blest be the day,
Walter the Abbot came that way!—
The sacred relic met his view—
Ah! well the pledge of Heaven he knew!
He screwed the chords, he tried a strain;
'Twas wild—he tuned and tried again,
Then poured the numbers bold and free,
The ancient magic melody.

The land was charmed to list his lays;
It knew the harp of ancient days.
The Border chiefs, that long had been
In sepulchres unheard and green,

Passed from their mouldy vaults away,
In armour red and stern array,
And by their moonlight halls were seen,
In visor, helm, and habergeon.
Even fairies sought our land again,
So powerful was the magic strain.

—JAMES HOGG

ON THE DEPARTURE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT FROM ABBOTSFORD FOR NAPLES

A trouble, not of clouds, or weeping rain,
Nor of the setting sun's pathetic light
Engendered, hangs o'er Eildon's triple height:
Spirits of Power, assembled there, complain
For kindred Power departing from their sight;
While Tweed, best pleased in chanting a blithe strain,
Saddens his voice again, and yet again.
Lift up your hearts, ye Mourners! for the might
Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes;
Blessings and prayers in nobler retinue
Than sceptered king or laurelled conqueror knows,
Follow this wondrous Potentate. Be true,
Ye winds of ocean, and the midland sea,
Wafting your Charge to soft Parthenope!

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

(*From*)

YARROW REVISITED

For Thou, upon a hundred streams,
By tales of love and sorrow,
Of faithful love, undaunted truth,
Hath shed the power of Yarrow;
And streams unknown, hills yet unseen,
Wherever they invite Thee,
At parent Nature's grateful call,
With gladness must requite Thee.

A gracious welcome shall be thine,
Such looks of love and honor
As thy own Yarrow gave to me
When first I gazed upon her;
Beheld what I had feared to see,
Unwilling to surrender
Dreams treasured up from early days,
The holy and the tender.

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

(*From*)

ENGLISH BARDS AND SCOTCH REVIEWERS

Next view in state, proud prancing on his roan,
The golden-crested haughty Marmion,
Now forging scrolls, now foremost in the fight,
Not quite a felon, yet but half a knight,
The gibbet or the field prepared to grace;
A mighty mixture of the great and base.
And think'st thou, Scott! by vain conceit perchance,
On public taste to foist thy stale romance,
Though Murray with his Miller may combine
To yield thy muse just half-a-crown per line?
No! when the sons of song descend to trade,
Their bays are sear, their former laurels fade,
Let such forego the poet's sacred name,
Who rack their brains for lucre, not for fame:
Still for stern Mammon may they toil in vain!
And sadly gaze on gold they cannot gain!
Such be their meed, such still the just reward
Of prostituted muse and hireling bard!
For this we spurn Apollo's vernal son,
And bid a long "good night to Marmion."

These are the themes that claim our plaudits now;
These are the Bards to whom the muse must bow;
While Milton, Dryden, Pope, alike forgot,
Resign their hallow'd bays to Walter Scott.

—LORD BYRON

INTRODUCTION TO LAYS AND LEGENDS OF ANCIENT GREECE

Like a fair country stretching wide
With woods on woods in leafy pride
And fields of golden grain,
And moors with purple heather glowing,
And healthful breezes bravely blowing,
Spreads Scott his vast domain.

—JOHN STUART BLACKIE

THE SCOTT MONUMENT, PRINCESS STREET, EDINBURGH

Here sits he throned, where men and gods behold
His domelike brow—a good man simply great;
Here in this highway proud, that arrow-straight
Cleaves at one stroke the new world from the old.
On this side, Commerce, Fashion, Progress, Gold;
On that, the Castle Hill, the Canongate,
A thousand years of war and love and hate
There palpably upstanding fierce and bold.
Here sits he throned; beneath him, full and fast,
The tides of Modern Life impetuous run.
O Scotland, was it well and meetly done?
For see! he sits with back turned on the Past—
He whose imperial edict bade it last
While yon grey ramparts kindle to the sun.

—WILLIAM WATSON

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH
1770-1850



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

TO A GENTLEMAN
(WILLIAM WORDSWORTH)

COMPOSED ON THE NIGHT AFTER THE RECITATION OF
A POEM ON THE GROWTH OF AN INDIVIDUAL MIND.

Friend of the wise! and Teacher of the Good!
Into my heart have I received that Lay
More than historic, that prophetic Lay
Wherein (high theme by thee first sung aright)
Of the foundations and the building up
Of a Human Spirit thou hast dared to tell
What may be told, to the understanding mind
Revealable; and what within the mind
By vital breathings secret as the soul
Of vernal growth, oft quickens in the heart
Thoughts all too deep for words!—

Theme hard as high!
Of smiles spontaneous, and mysterious fears
(The first-born they of Reason and twin-birth),
Of tides obedient to external force,
And currents self-determined, as might seem,
Or by some inner Power; of moments awful,
Now in thy inner life, and now abroad,
When power streamed from thee, and thy soul
received

The light reflected, as a light bestowed—
Of fancies fair, and milder hours of youth,
Hyblean murmurs of poetic thought
Industrious in its joy, in vales and glens
Native or outland, lakes and famous hills!
Or on the lonely high-road, when the stars
Were rising; or by secret mountain-streams,
The guides and the companions of thy way!
Of more than Fancy, of the Social Sense
Distending wide, and man beloved as man,
Where France in all her towns lay vibrating
Like some becalmed bark beneath the burst
Of Heaven's immediate thunder, when no cloud

Is visible, or shadow on the main.
For thou wert there, thine own brows garlanded,
Amid the tremor of a realm aglow,
Amid a mighty nation jubilant,
When from the general heart of human kind
Hope sprang forth like a full-born Deity!
—Of that dear Hope afflicted and struck down,
So summoned homeward, thenceforth calm
and sure
From the dread watch-tower of man's absolute self,
With light unwaning on her eyes, to look
Far on—herself a glory to behold,
The Angel of the vision! Then (last strain)
Of Duty, chosen Laws controlling choice,
Action and joy!—An orphic song indeed,
A song divine of high and passionate thoughts
To their own music chaunted!

O great Bard!

Ere yet that last strain dying awed the air,
With stedfast eye I viewed thee in the choir
Of ever-enduring men. The truly great
Have all one age, and from one visible space
Shed influence! They, both in power and act,
Are permanent, and Time is not with *them*,
Save as it worketh *for* them, they *in* it.
Nor less a sacred Roll, than those of old,
And to be placed, as they, with gradual fame
Among the archives of mankind, thy work
Makes audible a linked lay of Truth,
Of Truth profound a sweet continuous lay,
Not learnt, but native, her own natural notes!
Ah! as I listened with a heart forlorn,
The pulses of my being beat anew:
And even as life returns upon the drowned,
Life's joy rekindling roused a throng of pains—
Keen pangs of Love, awakening as a babe
Turbulent, with an outcry in the heart;

And fears self-willed, that shunned the eye
of hope;
And hope that scarce would know itself from fear;
Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain,
And genius given, and knowledge won in vain;
And all which I had culled in woodwalks wild,
And all which patient toil had reared, and all,
Commune with *thee* had opened out—but flowers
Strewed on my corse, and borne upon my bier,
In the same coffin, for the self-same grave!

That way no more! and ill beseems it me,
Who came a welcomer in herald's guise,
Singing of glory, and futurity,
To wander back on such unhealthful road,
Plucking the poisons of self-harm! And ill
Such intertwine beseems triumphal wreaths
Strew'd before *thy* advancing!

Nor do thou,
Sage Bard! impair the memory of that hour
Of thy communion with my nobler mind
By pity or grief, already felt too long!
Nor let my words import more blame than
needs.

The tumult rose and ceased: for Peace is nigh
Where wisdom's voice has found a listening
heart.

Amid the howl of more than wintry storms,
The halcyon hears the voice of vernal hours
Already on the wing.

Eve following eve,
Dear tranquil time, when the sweet sense of Home
Is sweetest! moments for their own sake hailed
And more desired, more precious, for thy
song,

In silence listening, like a devout child,
My soul lay passive, by thy various strain

Driven as in surges now beneath the stars,
With momentary stars of my own birth,
Fair constellated foam, still darting off
Into the darkness; now a tranquil sea,
Outspread and bright, yet swelling to the
moon.

And when—O Friend! my comforter and guide!
Strong in thyself, and powerful to give
strength!—

Thy long sustained Song finally closed,
And thy deep voice had ceased—yet thou
thyself

Wert still before my eyes, and round us both
That happy vision of beloved faces—
Scarce conscious, and yet conscious of its
close

I sate, my being blended in one thought
(Thought was it? or aspiration? or resolve?)
Absorbed, yet hanging still upon the sound—
And when I rose, I found myself in prayer.

—SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

TO WORDSWORTH

Those who have laid the harp aside
And turn'd to idler things,
From very restlessness have tried
The loose and dusty strings,
And, catching back some favourite strain,
Run with it o'er the chords again.

But Memory is not a Muse,

O Wordsworth! though 'tis said
They all descend from her, and use
To haunt her fountain-head:

That other men should work for me
In the rich mines of Poesie,

Pleases me better than the toil
Of smoothing under hardened hand,
With attic emery and oil,
The shining point for Wisdom's wand,
Like those thou temperest 'mid the rills
Descending from thy native hills.

Without his governance, in vain
Manhood is strong, and youth is bold.
If oftentimes the o'erpiled strain
Clogs in the furnace, and grows cold
Beneath his pinions deep and froze,
And swells and melts and flows no more.

That is because the heat beneath
Pants in its cavern poorly fed,
Life springs not from the couch of Death,
Nor Muse nor Grace can raise the dead;
Unturn'd then let the mass remain,
Intractable to sun or rain.

A marsh where only flat leaves lie,
And showing but the broken sky,
Too surely is the sweetest lay
That wins the ear and wastes the day,
Where youthful Fancy pouts alone
And lets not Wisdom touch her zone.

He who would build his fame up high,
The rule and plummet must apply.
Nor say, "I'll do what I have plann'd,"
Before he try if loam or sand
Be still remaining in the place
Delved for each polished pillar's base.
With skilful eye and fit device
Thou raisest every edifice,
Whether in sheltered vale it stand,

Or overlook the Dardan strand,
Amid the cypresses that mourn
Laodameia's love forlorn.

We both have run o'er half the space,
Listed for mortal's earthly race;
We both have crost life's fervid line,
And other stars before us shine:
May they be bright and prosperous
As those that have been stars for us!
Our course by Milton's light was sped,
And Shakespeare shining overhead:
Chatting on deck was Dryden too,
The Bacon of the rhyming crew;
None ever crossed our mystic sea
More richly stored with thought than he;
Tho' never tender nor sublime,
He wrestles with and conquers Time.
To learn my lore on Chaucer's knee,
I left much prouder company;
Thee gentle Spencer fondly led,
But me he mostly sent to bed.

I wish them every joy above
That highly blessed spirits prove,
Save one: and that too shall be theirs,
But after many rolling years,
When 'mid their light thy light appears.

—WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

THE LAST FRUIT OFF AN OLD TREE

XLVII

We know a poet rich in thought, profuse
In bounty; but his grain wants winnowing;
There hangs much chaff about it, barndoor dust,
Cobwebs, small insects: it might make a loaf,
A good large loaf, of household bread; but flour
Must be well bolted for a dainty roll.

—WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

(*From*)

ENGLISH BARDS AND SCOTCH REVIEWERS

Next comes the dull desciple of thy school,
That mild apostate from poetic rule,
The simple Wordsworth, framer of a lay
As soft as evening in his favourite May,
Who warns his friend "to shake off toil and trouble,
And quit his books, for fear of growing double;"
Who, both by precept and example, shows
That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose;
Convincing all, by demonstration plain,
Poetic souls delight in prose insane;
And Christmas stories tortured into rhyme
Contain the essence of the true sublime.
Thus, when he tells the tale of Betty Foy,
The idiot mother of "an idiot boy;"
A moon-struck, silly lad, who lost his way,
And, like his bard, confounded night with day;
So close on each pathetic part he dwells,
And each adventure so sublimely tells,
That all who view the "idiot in his glory"
Conceive the bard the hero of the story.

—LORD BYRON

TO WORDSWORTH

Poet of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return:
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first
 glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar:
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude:
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

TO WORDSWORTH

Thine is a strain to read among the hills,
The old and full of voices,—by the source
Of some free stream, whose gladdening presence fills
The solitude with sound; for in its course
Even such as thy deep song, that seems a part
Of those high scenes, a fountain from their heart.

Or its calm spirit fitly may be taken
To the still breast in sunny garden bowers,
Where vernal winds each tree's low tones awaken,
And bud and bell with changes mark the hours.
There let thy thoughts be with me, while the day
Sinks with a golden and serene decay.

Or by some hearth where happy faces meet,
When night hath hushed the woods, with all
 their birds,
There, from some gentle voice, that lay were sweet

As antique music, linked with household words;
While in pleased murmurs woman's lip might move,
And the raised eye of childhood shine in love.

Or where the shadows of dark solemn yews
Brood silently o'er some lone burial-ground,
Thy verse hath power that brightly might diffuse
A breath, a kindling, as of spring, around;
From its own glow of hope and courage high,
And steadfast faith's victorious constancy.

True bard and holy!—thou art e'en as one
Who, by some secret gift of soul or eye,
In every spot beneath the smiling sun,
Sees where the springs of living waters lie:
Unseen awhile they sleep—till, touched by thee,
Bright healthful waves flow forth, to each glad
wanderer free.

—FELICIA DOROTHEA HEMANS

TO WORDSWORTH

There have been poets that in verse display
The elemental forms of human passions:
Poets have been, to whom the fickle fashions
And all the wilful humours of the day
Have furnished matter for a polished lay:
And many are the smooth elaborate tribe
Who, emulous of thee, the shape describe,
And fain would every shifting hue pourtray
Of restless Nature. But, thou mighty Seer!
'Tis thine to celebrate the thoughts that make
The life of souls, the truths for whose sweet sake
We to ourselves and to our God are dear.
Of Nature's inner shrine thou art the priest,
Where most she works when we perceive her least.

—HARTLEY COLERIDGE

WORDSWORTH

(WRITTEN ON A BLANK LEAF OF HIS MEMOIRS)

Dear friends, who read the world aright,
And in its common forms discern
A beauty and a harmony
The many never learn!

Kindred in soul of him who found
In simple flower and leaf and stone
The impulse of the sweetest lays
Our Saxon tongue has known,—

Accept this record of a life
As sweet and pure, as calm and good,
As a long day of blindest June,
In green field and in wood.

How welcome to our ears, long pained
By strife of sect and party noise,
The brook-like murmur of his song
Of nature's simple joys!

The violet by its mossy stone,
The primrose by the river's brim,
And chance-sown daffodil, have found
Immortal life through him.

The sunrise on his breezy lake,
The rosy tints his sunset brought,
World-seen, are gladdening all the vales
And mountain-peaks of thought.

Art builds on sand; the works of pride
And human passion change and fall;
But that which shares the life of God
With Him surviveth all.

—JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDSWORTH BY B. R. HAYDON

Wordsworth upon Helvellyn! Let the cloud
Ebb audibly along the mountain wind,
Then break against the rock, and show behind
The lowland valleys floating up to crowd
The sense with beauty. He with forehead bowed
And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined
Before the sovran thought of his own mind,
And very meek with inspirations proud,
Takes here his rightful place as poet-priest
By the high altar, singing prayer and prayer
To the higher Heavens. A noble vision free
Our Haydon's hand has flung out from the mist:
No portrait this, with academic air!
This is the poet and his poetry.

—ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

AFTER A LECTURE ON WORDSWORTH

Come, spread your wings, as I spread mine,
And leave the crowded hall
For where the eyes of twilight shine
O'er evening's western wall.

These are the pleasant Berkshire hills,
Each with its leafy crown;
Hark! from their sides a thousand rills
Come singing sweetly down.

A thousand rills; they leap and shine,
Strained through the shadowy nooks,
Till, clasped in many a gathering twine,
They swell a hundred brooks.

A hundred brooks, and still they run
With ripple, shade, and gleam,
Till, clustering all their braids in one,
They flow a single stream.

A bracelet spun from mountain mist,
A silvery sash unwound,
With ox-bow curve and sinous twist
It writhes to reach the Sound.

This is my bark,—a pygmy's ship:
Beneath a child it rolls;
Fear not,—one body makes it dip,
But not a thousand souls.

Float we the grassy banks between;
Without an oar we glide;
The meadows, drest in living green,
Unroll on either side.

—Come, take the book we love so well,
And let us read and dream
We see whate'er its pages tell,
And sail an English stream.

Up to the clouds the lark has sprung,
Still trilling as he flies;
The linnet sings as there he sung;
The unseen cuckoo cries.

And daisies strew the banks along,
And yellow kingcups shine,
With cowslips, and a primrose throng,
And humble celandine.

Ah foolish dream! when Nature nursed
Her daughter in the west,
The fount was drained that opened first;
She bared the other breast.

On the young planet's orient shore
Her morning hand she tried;
Then turned the broad medallion o'er
And stamped the sunset side.

Take what she gives, her pine's tall stem
Her elm with hanging spray;
She wears her mountain diadem
Still in her own proud way.

Look on the forest's ancient kings,
The hemlock's towering pride:
Yon trunk had thrice a hundred rings,
And fell before it died.

Nor think that Nature saves her bloom
And slights our grassy plain;
For us she wears her court costume,—
Look on its brodered train;

The lily with the sprinkled dots,
Brands of the noontide beam;
The cardinal, and the blood-red spots,
Its double in the stream,

As if some wounded eagle's breast,
Slow throbbing o'er the plain,
Had left its airy path impressed
In drops of scarlet rain.

And hark! and hark! the woodland rings;
There thrilled the thrush's soul;
And look! that flash of flamy wings,—
The fire-plumed oriole!

Above, the hen-hawk swims and swoops,
Flung from the bright, blue sky;
Below, the robin hops, and whoops
His piercing, Indian cry.

Beauty runs virgin in the woods
Robed in her rustic green,
And oft a longing thought intrudes,
As if we might have seen

Her every finger's every joint
Ringed with some golden line,
Poet whom Nature did anoint!
Had our wild home been thine.

Yet think not so; Old England's blood
Runs warm in English veins;
But wafted o'er the icy flood
Its better life remains:

Our children know each wildwood smell,
The bayberry and the fern,
The man who does not know them well
Is all too old to learn.

Be patient! On the breathing page
Still pants our hurried past;
Pilgrim and soldier, saint and sage,—
The poet comes the last!

Though still the lark-voiced matins ring
The world has known so long;
The wood-thrush of the West shall sing
Earth's last sweet even-song!

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

(From)

MEMORIAL VERSES

WORDSWORTH

* * * * * Ah, pale ghosts, rejoice!
For never has such soothing voice
Been to your shadowy world convey'd,
Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade
Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.
Wordsworth has gone from us—and ye,
Ah, may ye feel his voice as we!
He too upon a wintry clime
Had fallen—on this iron time
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round;
He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.
He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth,
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth return'd; for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
The freshness of the early world.
Ah! since dark days still bring to light
Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
Others will teach us how to dare,
And against fear our breast to steel;
Others will strengthen us to bear—

But who, ah! who, will make us feel
The cloud of mortal destiny,
Others will front it fearlessly—
But who, like him, will put it by?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,
O Rotha, with thy living wave!
Sing him thy best! for few or none
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

—MATTHEW ARNOLD

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH 1845

Gentle and grave, in simple dress,
And features by keen mountain air
Moulded to solemn ruggedness,
The man we came to see sat there:
Not apt for speech, nor quickly stirr'd
Unless when heart to heart replied;
A bearing equally remov'd
From vain display or sullen pride.

The sinewy frame yet spoke of one
Known to the hillsides: on his head
Some five-and-seventy winters gone
Their crown of perfect white had shed:—
As snow-tipp'd summits toward the sun
In calm of lonely radiance press,
Touch'd by the broadening light of death
With a serener pensiveness.

O crown of venerable age!
O brighter crown of well-spent years!
The bard, the patriot, and the sage,
The heart that never bow'd to fears!
That was an age of soaring souls;

Yet none with a more liberal scope
Survey'd the sphere of human things;
None with such manliness of hope.

Others, perchance, as keenly felt,
As musically sang as he;
To Nature as devoutly knelt,
Or toil'd to serve humanity:
But none with those ethereal notes,
That star-like sweep of self-control;
The insight into worlds unseen,
The lucid sanity of soul.
The fever of our fretful life,
The autumn poison of the air,
The soul with its own self at strife,
He saw and felt, but could not share:
With eye made clear by pureness, pierced
The life of Man and Nature through;
And read the heart of common things,
Till new seem'd old, and old was new.

To his own self not always just,
Bound in the bonds that all men share,—
Confess the failings as we must,
The lion's mark is always there!
Nor any song so pure, so great
Since his, who closed the sightless eyes,
Our Homer of the war in Heaven,
To wake in his own Paradise.

O blaring trumpets of the world!
O glories, in their budding sere!
O flaunting roll of Fame unfurl'd!
Here was the king—the hero here!
It was a strength and joy for life
In that great presence once to be;
That on the boy he gently smil'd,
That those white hands were laid on me.

—FRANCIS TURNER PALGRAVE

THE POETRY OF WORDSWORTH

A breath of the mountains, fresh born in the
regions majestic,
That look with their eye-daring summits deep
into the sky.
The voice of great Nature; sublime with her
lofty conceptions,
Yet earnest and simple as any sweet child of the
green lowly vale.

—GEORGE MEREDITH

TO WORDSWORTH

Thro' clouds and darkness to meridian height
Of glory, thou hast upward climbed, and now
In empyrean blue, with cloudless brow
Look'st o'er a prospect clear and infinite—
Rejoicing, by rejoicing in, thy light!
The vapours, which at first would not allow
Full view of thee, are gone, we know not how;
Absorbed into thy splendor, and thy might!
And now, great spirit, thou unto thy close
Art hastening, and trails of glory make
The heavens gorgeous for thy repose—
Thou hast made day for all men to partake,
And having thought of others and their woes,
Shalt be remembered now for thy own sake.

—HENRY ELLISON

WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE

I

The old rude church, with bare, bald tower, is here;
Beneath its shadow high-born Rotha flows;
Rotha, remembering well who slumbers near,
And with cool murmur lulling his repose.

Rotha, remembering well who slumbers near.
His hills, his lakes, his streams are with him yet.
Surely the heart that read her own heart clear
Nature forgets not soon: 'tis we forget.

We that with vagrant soul his fixity
Have slighted; faithless, done his deep faith
wrong;
Left him for poorer loves, and bowed the knee
To misbegotten strange new gods of song.

Yet, led by hollow ghost or beckoning elf
Far from her homestead to the desert bourn,
The vagrant soul returning to herself
Wearily wise, must needs to him return.

To him and to the powers that with him dwell:—
Inflowings that divulged not whence they came;
And that secluded spirit unknowable,
The mystery we make darker with a name;

The Somewhat which we name but cannot know,
Ev'n as we name a star and only see
His quenchless flashings forth, which ever show
And ever hide him, and which are not he.

II

Poet who sleepest by this wandering wave!
When thou wast born, what birth-gift hadst
thou then?
To thee what wealth was that the Immortals gave,
The wealth thou gavest in thy turn to men?

Not Milton's keen, translunar music thine;
Not Shakespeare's cloudless, boundless
human view;
Not Shelley's flush of rose on peaks divine;
Nor yet the wizard twilight Coleridge knew.

What hadst thou that could make so large amends
For all thou hadst not and thy peers possessed,
Motion and fire, swift means to radiant ends?—
Thou hadst, for weary feet, the gift of rest.

From Shelley's dazzling glow or thunderous haze,
From Byron's tempest-anger, tempest-mirth,
Men turned to thee and found—not blast and
blaze,
Tumult of tottering heavens, but peace on earth.

Nor peace that grows by Lethe, scentless flower,
There in white languors to decline and cease;
But peace whose names are also rapture, power,
Clear sight, and love: for these are parts of
peace.

III

I hear it vouched the Muse is with us still;—
If less divinely frenzied than of yore,
In lieu of feelings she has wondrous skill
To simulate emotion felt no more.

Not such the authentic Presence pure, that made
This valley vocal in the great days gone!—
In *his* great days, while yet the spring-time played
About him, and the mighty morning shone.

No word-mosaic artificer, he sang
A lofty song of lowly weal and dole.
Right from the heart, right to the heart it sprang,
Or from the soul leapt instant to the soul.

He felt the charm of childhood, grace of youth,
Grandeur of age, insisting to be sung.
The impassioned argument was simple truth
Half-wondering at its own melodious tongue.

Impassioned? ay, to the song's ecstatic core!
But far removed were clangour, storm and feud;
For plenteous health was his, exceeding store
Of joy, and an impassioned quietude.

IV

A hundred years ere he to manhood came,
Song from celestial heights had wandered down,
Put off her robe of sunlight, dew and flame,
And donned a modish dress to charm the Town.

Thenceforth she but festooned the porch of things;
Apt at life's lore, incurious what life meant.
Dextrous of hand, she struck her lute's few
strings;
Ignobly perfect, barrenly content.

Unflushed with ardour and unblanched with awe,
Her lips in profitless derision curled,
She saw with dull emotion—if she saw—
The vision of the glory of the world.

The human masque she watched, with dreamless
eyes
In whose clear shallows lurked no trembling shade:
The stars, unkennered by her, might set and rise,
Unmarked by her, the daisies bloom and fade.

The age grew sated with her sterile wit.
Herself waxed weary on her loveless throne.
Men felt life's tide, the sweep and surge of it,
And craved a living voice, a natural tone.

For none the less, though song was but half true,
The world lay common, one abounding theme.
Man joyed and wept, and fate was ever new,
And love was sweet, life real, death no dream.

In sad stern verse the rugged scholar-sage
Bemoaned his toil unvalued, youth uncheered.
His numbers wore the vesture of the age,
But, 'neath it beating, the great heart was
heard.

From dewy pastures, uplands sweet with thyme,
A virgin breeze freshened the jaded day.
It wafted Collins' lonely vesper-chime,
It breathed abroad the frugal note of Gray.

It fluttered here and there, nor swept in vain
The dusty haunts where futile echoes dwell,—
Then, in a cadence soft as summer rain,
And sad from Auburn voiceless, drooped and fell.

It drooped and fell, and one 'neath northern skies,
With southern heart, who tilled his father's
field,
Found poesy a-dying, bade her rise
And touch quick nature's hem and go forth
healed.

On life's broad plain the ploughman's conquering
share
Upturned the fallow lands of truth anew,
And o'er the formal garden's trim parterre
The peasant's team a ruthless furrow drew.

Bright was his going forth, but clouds ere long
Whelmed him; in gloom his radiance set, and
those

Twin morning stars of the new century's song,
Those morning stars that sang together, rose.

In elvish speech the *Dreamer* told his tale
Of marvellous oceans swept by fateful wings.—
The *Seer* strayed not from earth's human pale,
But the mysterious face of common things.

He mirrored as the moon in Rydal Mere
Is mirrored, when the breathless night hangs
blue:
Strangely remote she seems and wondrous near,
And by some nameless difference born anew.

V

Peace—Peace—and rest! Ah, how the lyre is
loth,
Or powerless now, to give what all men seek!
Either it deadens with ignoble sloth
Or deafens with shrill tumult, loudly weak.

Where is the singer whose large notes and clear
Can heal and arm and plenish and sustain?
Lo, one with empty music floods the ear,
And one, the heart refreshing, tires the brain.

And idly tuneful, the loquacious throng
Flutter and twitter, prodigal of time,
And little masters make a toy of song
Till grave men weary of the sound of rhyme.

And some go pranked in faded antique dress,
Abhorring to be hale and glad and free;
And some parade a conscious naturalness,
The scholar's not the child's simplicity.

Enough;—and wisest who from words forbear.
The kindly river rails not as it glides;
And suave and charitable, the winning air
Chides not at all, or only him who chides.

VI

Nature! we storm thine ear with choric notes.
Thou answerest through the calm great nights
and days,

“Laud me who will: not tuneless are your throats;
Yet if ye paused I should not miss the praise.”

We falter, half rebuked, and sing again.
We chant thy desertness and haggard gloom,
Or with thy splendid wrath inflate the strain,
Or touch it with thy colour and perfume.

One, his melodious blood aflame for thee,
Wooed with fierce lust, his hot heart world-de-
filed.

One, with the upward eye of infancy,
Looked in thy face, and felt himself thy
child.

Thee he approached without distrust or dread—
Beheld thee throned, an awful queen, above—
Climbed to thy lap and merely laid his head
Against thy warm wild heart of mother-love.

He heard that vast heart beating—thou didst press
Thy child so close, and lov'dst him unaware.
Thy beauty gladdened him; yet he scarce less
Had loved thee, had he never found thee fair!

For thou wast not as legendary lands
To which with curious eyes and ears we roam.
Nor wast thou as a fane 'mid solemn sands,
Where palmers halt at evening. Thou wast
home.

And here, at home, still bides he; but he sleeps;
Not to be wakened even at thy word;
Though we, vague dreamers, dream he somewhere
keeps
An ear still open to thy voice still heard,—

Thy voice, as heretofore, about him blown,
For ever blown about his silence now;
Thy voice, though deeper, yet so like his own
That almost, when he sang, we deemed 'twas
thou!

VII

Behind Helm Crag and Silver Howe the sheen
Of the retreating day is less and less.
Soon will the lordlier summits, here unseen,
Gather the night about their nakedness.

The half-heard bleat of sheep comes from the hill,
Faint sounds of childish play are in the air.
The river murmurs past. All else is still.
The very graves seem stiller than they were.

Afar though nation be on nation hurled,
And life with toil and ancient pain depressed,
Here one may scarce believe the whole wide world
Is not at peace, and all man's heart at rest.

Rest! 'twas the gift *he* gave; and peace! the
shade
He spread, for spirits fevered with the sun.
To him his bounties are come back—here laid
In rest, in peace, his labor nobly done.

—WILLIAM WATSON

TO JAMES BROMLEY

WITH "WORDSWORTH'S GRAVE"

Ere vandal lords with lust of gold accurst
Deface each hallowed hillside we revere—
Ere cities in their million-throated thirst
Menace each sacred mere—

Let us give thanks because one nook hath been
Unflooded yet by desecration's wave,
The little churchyard in the valley green
That holds our Wordsworth's grave.
'Twas there I plucked these elegiac blooms,
There where he rests 'mid comrades fit and
few,
And thence I bring this growth of classic tombs,
An offering, friend, to you—
You who have loved like me his simple themes,
Loved his sincere large accent nobly plain,
And loved the land whose mountains
and whose streams
Are lovelier for his strain.

It may be that his manly chant, beside
More dainty numbers, seems a rustic tune;
It may be, thought has broadened since he died
Upon the century's noon;
It may be that we can no longer share
The faith which from his fathers he
received;
It may be that our doom is to despair
Where he with joy believed;—

Enough that there is none since risen who sings
A song so gotten of the immediate soul,
So instant from the vital fount of things
Which is our source and goal;
And though at touch of later hands there
float
More artful tones than from his lyre he drew,
Ages may pass ere trills another note
So sweet, so great, so true.

—WILLIAM WATSON

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE
1772—1834



SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

FROM THE PRELUDE
XIV-277-301

* * * * O capacious Soul!
Placed on this earth to love and understand,
And from thy presence shed the light of love,
Shall I be mute, ere thou be spoken of?
Thy kindred influence to my heart of hearts
Did also find its way. Thus fear relaxed
Her overweening grasp; thus thoughts and things
In the self-haunting spirit learned to take
More rational proportions; mystery,
The incumbent mystery of sense and soul,
Of life and death, time and eternity,
Admitted more habitually a mild
Interposition—a serene delight
In closelier gathering cares, such as become
A human creature, howso'er endowed,
Poet, or destined for a humbler name;
And so the deep enthusiastic joy,
The rapture of the hallelujah sent
From all that breathes and is, was chastened,
stemmed
And balanced by pathetic truth, by trust
In hopeful reason, leaning on the stay
Of Providence; and in reverence for duty,
Here, if need be, struggling with storms, and there
Strewing in peace life's humblest ground with herbs,
At every season green, sweet at all hours.

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

(*From*)

ENGLISH BARDS AND SCOTCH REVIEWERS

Shall gentle Coleridge pass unnoticed here,
To turgid ode and tumid stanza dear?
Though themes of innocence amuse him best,
Yet still obscurity's a welcome guest.
If Inspiration should her aid refuse
To him who takes a pixy for a muse,
Yet none in lofty numbers can surpass
The bard who soars to elegise an ass;
So well the subject suits his noble mind,
He brays the laureate of the long-eared kind.

—LORD BYRON

ON READING COLERIDGE'S EPITAPH WRITTEN BY HIMSELF

Spirit! so oft in radiant freedom soaring
High through seraphic mysteries unconfined,
And oft, a diver through the deep of mind,
Its caverns, far below its waves, exploring;
And oft such strains of breezy music pouring,
As, with the floating sweetness of their sighs,
Could still all fevers of the heart, restoring
Awhile that freshness left in Paradise;
Say, of those glorious wanderings what the goal?
What the rich fruitage to man's kindred soul
From wealth of thine bequeathed? O strong, and
high,
And sceptered intellect! thy goal confest
Was the Redeemer's cross—thy last bequest
One lesson breathing thence profound humility!

—FELICIA DOROTHEA HEMANS

COLERIDGE

His eye saw all things in the symmetry
Of true and just proportion; and his ear
That inner tone could hear
Which flows beneath the outer: therefore he
Was as a mighty shell, fashioning all
The winds to one rich sound, ample and musical.

Yet dim that eye with gazing upon heaven;
Wearied with vigils, and the frequent birth
Of tears when turned to earth:
Therefore, though farthest ken to him was given,
Near things escaped him: through them—as a gem
Diaphonous—he saw; and therefore saw not them.

Moreover, men whom sovereign wisdom teaches
That God not less in humblest forms abides
Than those the great veil hides,
Such men a tremor of bright reverence reaches;
And thus, confronted ever with high things,
Like cherubim they hide their eyes between their
wings.

No loftier, purer soul than his hath ever
With awe revolved the planetary page,
From infancy to age,
Of Knowledge; sedulous and proud to give her
The whole of his great heart for her own sake;
For what she is; not what she does, or what can
make.

And mighty Voices from afar came to him:
Converse of trumpets held by cloudy forms,
And speech of choral storms:
Spirits of night and noontide bent to woo him:
He stood the while, lonely and desolate
As Adam, when he ruled a world, yet found no mate.

His loftiest thoughts were but like palms
uplifted,
Aspiring, yet in supplicating guise;
His sweetest songs were sighs:
Adown Lethean streams his spirit drifted,
Under Elysian shades from popped bank
With Amaranths massed in dark luxuriance dank.
Coleridge, farewell! That great and grave
transition

Which may not Priest, or King, or Conqueror spare,
Nor yet a Babe can bear,
Has come to thee. Through life a goodly vision
Was thine; and time it was thy rest to take.
Soft be the sound ordained thy sleep to break—
When thou art waking, wake me, for thy Master's
sake!

—AUBREY DE VERE

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

His Soul fared forth (as from the deep home-grove
The father-songster plies the hour-long quest,)
To feed his soul-brood hungering in the nest;
But his warm Heart, the mother-bird, above
Their callow fledgling progeny still hove
With tented roof of wings and fostering breast
Till the Soul fed the soul-brood. Richly blest
From Heaven their growth, whose food was Human
Love.

Yet ah! Like desert pools that show the stars
Once in long leagues,—even such the scarce-
snatched hours
Which deepening pain left to his lordliest powers:—
Heaven lost through spider-trammelled prison-bars.
Six years, from sixty saved! Yet kindling skies
Own them, a beacon to our centuries.

—DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

THE POETRY OF COLERIDGE

A brook glancing under green leaves, self-delighting,
exulting,
And full of a gurgling melody ever renewed—
Renewed thro' all changes of Heaven, unceasing
in sunlight,
Unceasing in moonlight, but hushed in the beams
of the holier orb.

—GEORGE MEREDITH

COLERIDGE AT CHAMOUNY

I would I knew what ever happy stone
Of all these dateless records, gray and vast,
Keeps silent memory of that sunrise lone
When, lost to earth, the soul of Coleridge passed
From earthly time to one immortal hour;
There thought's faint stir woke echoes of the mind
That broke to thunder tones of mightier power
From depths and heights mysterious, undefined;
As when the soft snows, drifting from the rock,
Rouse the wild clamor of the avalanche shock.

Who may not envy him that awful morn
When marvelling at his risen self he trod,
And thoughts intense as pain were fiercely born,
Till rose his soul in one great psalm to God.
A man to-morrow weak as are the worst,
A man to whom all depths, all heights belong,
Now with too bitter hours of weakness cursed,
Now winged with vigor, as a giant strong
To take our groping hearts with tender hand,
And set them surely where God's angels stand.

On peaks of lofty contemplation raised,
Such as shall never see earth's common son,

High as the snowy altar which he praised,
An hour's creative ecstasy he won.
Yet, in this frenzy of the lifted soul
Mocked him the nothingness of human speech,
When through his being visions past control
Swept, strong as mountain streams.—Alas! To
reach
Words equal-winged as thought to none is given,
To none of earth to speak the tongue of heaven.

The eagle-flight of genius gladness hath,
And joy is ever with its victor swoop
Through sun and storm. Companionless its path
In earthly realms, and, when its pinions droop,
Faint memories only of the heavenly sun,
Dim records of ethereal space it brings
To show how haughty was the height it won,
To prove what freedom had its airy wings.
This is the curse of genius, that earth's night
Dims the proud glory of its heavenward flight.
—S. WEIR MITCHELL

COLERIDGE

I see thee pine like her in golden story
Who, in her prison, woke and saw, one day,
The gates thrown open—saw the sunbeam's play,
With only a web 'tween her and summer's glory;
Who, when that web—so frail, so transitory
It broke before her breath—had fallen away,
Saw other webs and others rise for aye
Which kept her prison'd till her hair was hoary.
Those songs half-sung that yet were all-divine—
That woke Romance, the queen, to reign afresh—
Had been but preludes from that lyre of thine,
Could thy rare spirit's wings have pierced the mesh

Spun by the wizard who compels the flesh,
But lets the poet see how heav'n can shine.

—THEODORE WATTS

LINES IN A FLYLEAF OF "CHRISTABEL"

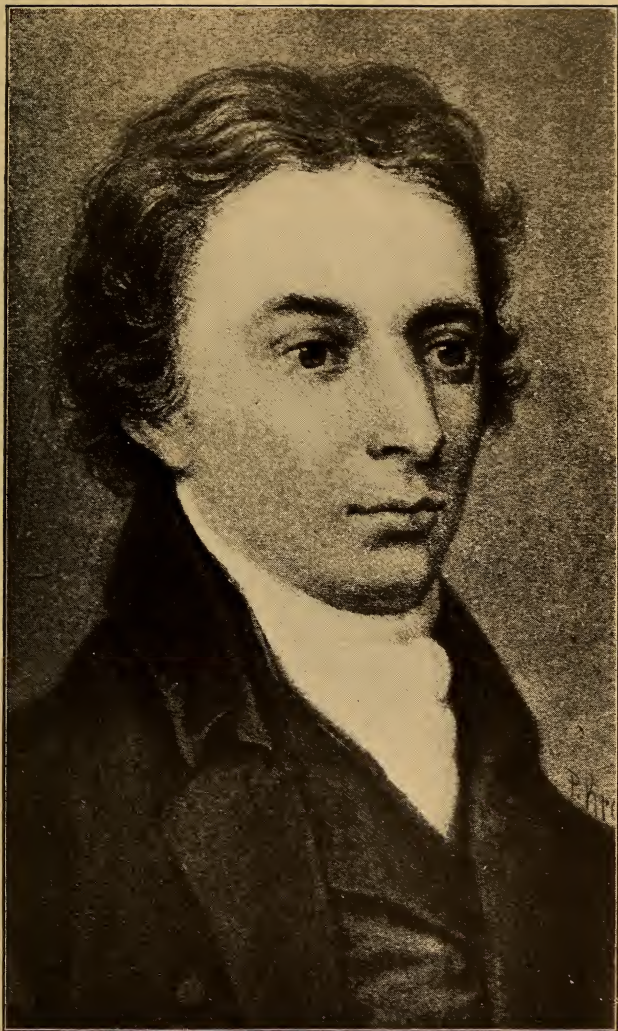
Inhospitably hast thou entertained,
O Poet, us the bidden to thy board,
Whom in mid-feast, and while our thousand mouths
Are one laudation of the festal cheer,
Thou from thy table dost dismiss, unfilled.
Yet loudlier thee than many a lavish host
We praise, and oftener thy repast half-served
Than many a stintless banquet, prodigally
Through satiate hours prolonged; nor praise less
well

Because with tongues thou hast not cloyed, and lips
That mourn the parsimony of affluent souls,
And mix the lamentation with the laud.

—WILLIAM WATSON

ROBERT SOUTHEY

1774—1843



ROBERT SOUTHEY

INSCRIPTION

FOR A MONUMENT IN CROSTHWAITE
CHURCH, IN THE VALE OF KESWICK

Ye vales and hills whose beauty hither drew
The poet's steps, and fixed him here, on you
His eyes have closed! And ye, lov'd books, no more
Shall Southey feed upon your precious lore,
To works that ne'er shall forfeit their renown,
Adding immortal labours of his own—
Whether he traced historic truth, with zeal
For the State's guidance, or the Church's weal,
Or Fancy, disciplined by studious art,
Inform'd his pen, or wisdom of the heart,
Or judgments sanctioned in the Patriot's mind
By reverence for the rights of all mankind.
Wide were his aims, yet in no human breast
Could private feelings meet for holier rest.
His joys, his griefs, have vanished like a cloud
From Skiddaw's top; but he to heaven was vowed
Through his industrious life, and Christian faith
Calmed in his soul the fear of change and death.

—WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

ON SOUTHEY'S BIRTHDAY, Nov. 4 CXXI

No angel borne on whiter wing
Hath visited the sons of men,
Teaching the song they ought to sing
And guiding right the unsteady pen.
Recorded not on earth alone,
O Southey! is thy natal day,
But there where stands the choral throne
Show us thy light and point the way.

—WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

TO SOUTHEY

Indweller of a peaceful vale,
Ravaged erewhile by white-hair'd Dane;
Rare architect of many a wondrous tale,
Which, till Helvellyn's head lie prostrate,
shall remain!

From Armo's side I hear thy Derwent flow,
And see methinks the lake below
Reflect thy graceful progeny, more fair
And radiant than the purest waters are,
Even when gurgling in their joy among
The bright and blessed throng,
Whom on her arm recline
The beauteous Proserpine
With tenderest regretful gaze,
Thinking of Enna's yellow field, surveys.

Alas! that snows are shed
Upon thy laurel'd head,
Hurtled by many cares and many wrongs!
Malignity lets none
Approach the Delphic throne;
A hundred lane-fed curs bark down Fame's
hundred tongues.
But this is in the night, when men are slow
To raise their eyes, when high and low,
The scarlet and the colourless, are one:
Soon sleep unbars his noiseless prison,
And active minds again are risen;
Where are the curs? dream-bound, and whimpering
in the sun.

At fife's or lyre's or tabor's sound
The dance of youth, O Southey, runs not round
But closes at the bottom of the room
Amid the falling dust and deepening gloom,

Where the weary sit them down,
And Beauty too unbraids, and waits a lovelier
crown.

We hurry to the river we must cross,
And swifter downward every footstep
wends;
Happy, who reach it ere they count the loss
Of half their faculties and half their
friends!

When we are come to it, the stream
Is not so dreary as they deem
Who look on it from haunts too dear;
The weak from Pleasure's baths feel most its chil-
ling air.

No firmer breast than thine hath Heaven
To poet sage or hero given:
No heart more tender, none more just
To that He largely placed in trust:
Therefore shalt thou, whatever date
Of years be thine, with soul elate
Rise up before the eternal throne,
And hear in God's own voice "Well done."

Not, were that submarine
Gem-lighted city mine,
Wherein my name, engraven by thy hand,
Above the royal gleam of blazonry shall
stand;

Not, were all Syracuse
Pour'd forth before my muse,
With Hiero's cars and steeds, and Pindar's
lyre

Brightening the path with more than solar fire,
Could I, as would beseem, requite the praise
Showered upon my low head from thy most
lofty lays.

—WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR
177

(*From*)

ENGLISH BARDS AND SCOTCH REVIEWERS

The time has been, when yet the muse was young,
When Homer swept the lyre, and Maro sung,
An Epic scarce ten centuries could claim,
While awe-struck nations hailed the magic name:
The work of each immortal bard appears
The single wonder of a thousand years.
Empires have mouldered from the face of earth,
Tongues have expired with those who gave them birth,
Without the glory such a strain can give,
As even in ruin bids the language live.
Not so with us, though minor bards, content,
On one great work a life of labour spent:
With eagle pinion soaring to the skies,
Behold the ballad-monger Southey rise!
To him let Camoens, Milton, Tasso yield,
Whose annual strains, like armies, take the field.
First in the ranks see Joan of Arc advance,
The scourge of England and the boast of France!
Though burnt by wicked Bedford for a witch,
Behold her statue placed in glory's niche;
Her fetters burst, and just released from prison,
A virgin phoenix from her ashes risen.
Next see tremendous Thalaba come on,
Arabia's monstrous, wild and wondrous son;
Domdaniel's dread destroyer, who o'erthrew
More mad magicians than the world e'er knew.
Immortal hero! all thy foes o'ercome,
For ever reign—the rival of Tom Thumb!
Since startled metre fled before thy face,
Well wert thou doomed the last of all thy race!
Well might triumphant genii bear thee hence,
Illustrious conqueror of common sense!
Now, last and greatest, Madoc spreads his sails,
Cacique in Mexico, and Prince in Wales;
Tells us strange tales, as other travellers do,

More old than Mandeville's, and not so true.
Oh! Southey! Southey! cease thy varied song!
A bard may chaunt too often and too long:
As thou art strong in verse, in mercy, spare!
A fourth, alas! were more than we could bear.
But if, in spite of all the world can say,
Thou still wilt verseward plod thy weary way;
If still in Berkeley ballads most uncivil,
Thou wilt devote old women to the devil,
The babe unborn thy dread intent may rue:
"God help thee," Southey, and thy readers too.
—LORD BYRON

TO ROBERT SOUTHEY

NEITHER THE ESQUIRE, THE LAUREATE, THE LL. D., BUT THE
GOOD MAN, THE MERRY MAN, THE POET, AND THE DOCTOR

He was not born beneath the Cambrian hills;
No mountain breezes lull'd his infant slumbers;
Loud rattling cars, and penny-dropping tills,
And blended murmurs of conglomerate numbers,
Were the chief sounds that baby Robert heard;
The pecking sparrow, his sole household bird.

Great Bristol was his nest and natal town,
And not till he had cast his baby frock
He felt the liberal air of Durdum Down,
Or look'd on Avon from St. Vincent's rock,
Whence many a bark was seen in trim array,
Bound on bad quest to hapless Africa.

'Tis hard to say what might have been his lot,
If born with Nature from the first to dwell;
Yet am I prone to guess that he would not
Have conn'd or known, or loved her half so well.
She was a stranger to his opening eyes,
Clad with the charm of still renew'd surprise.

And finding little in the daily round
To fashion fancy from the things of sense,
His love of kin was all the more profound;
Not wide in surface, but in act intense,
Affection still a dutiful reality,
The ground and law, and soul of all morality.

Yet keeping still his little heart at home,
He wander'd with his mind in realms remote,
Made playmates of the Fairy, Sylph, and Gnome,
And knew each Giant, Knight, and Wight of note
Whate'er of wonderful the East and North,
Darkly commingling, gender'd and brought forth.

Sweet thought he found, and noble, in the story
Of the Wehr-Wolf and sweet Red Ridinghood,
Shudder'd at feast of Ogre, raw and gory,
And watched the Sleeping Beauty in the wood.

—HARTLEY COLERDIGE

THE POETRY OF SOUTHEY

Keen as an eagle whose flight toward the dim
 empyrean
Fearless of toil or fatigue ever royally wends!
Vast in the cloud-coloured robes of the balm-
 breathing Orient
Lo! the grand Epic advances, unfolding the humanest
 truth.

—GEORGE MEREDITH

LORD BYRON
1788—1824



LORD BYRON

SONNET TO BYRON

[I am afraid these verses will not please you, but]
If I esteemed you less, Envy would kill
Pleasure, and leave to Wonder and Despair
The ministration of the thoughts that fill
The mind which, like a worm whose life may share
A portion of the unapproachable,
Marks your creations rise as fast and fair
As perfect worlds at the Creator's will.
But such is my regard that nor your power
To soar above the heights where others [climb],
Nor fame, that shadow of the unborn hour
Cast from the envious future on the time,
Move one regret for his unhonored name
Who dares these words:—the worm beneath the sod
May lift itself in homage of the God.

—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

FRAGMENT: TO BYRON

O mighty mind, in whose deep stream this age
Shakes like a reed in the unheeding storm,
Why dost thou curb not thine own sacred rage?

—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

BYRON

Byron! how sweetly sad thy melody!
Attuning still the soul to tenderness,
As if soft Pity, with unusual stress,
Had touch'd her plaintive lute, and thou being by,
Hadst caught the tones, nor suffer'd them to die.
O'ershadowing sorrow doth not make thee less
Delightful: thou thy griefs dost dress
With a bright halo, shining beamily,
As when a cloud the golden moon doth veil,
Its sides are tinged with a resplendent glow,

Through the dark robe oft amber rays prevail,
And like fair veins in sable marble flow.
Still warble, dying swan! still tell the tale,
The enchanting tale, the tale of pleasing woe.
—JOHN KEATS

STANZAS ON THE DEATH OF LORD BYRON

“—*I am not now
That which I have been.*”—CHILDE HAROLD

He *was*, and *is* not! Graecia's trembling shore,
Sighing through all her palmy groves, shall tell
That Harold's pilgrimage at last is o'er—
Mute the impassioned tongue, and tuneful shell,
That erst was wont in noblest strains to swell—
Hush'd the proud shouts that rode Aegaea's wave!
For lo! the great Deliv'rer breathes farewell!
Gives to the world his mem'ry and a grave—
Expiring in the land he only lived to save!

Mourn, Hellas, mourn! and o'er thy widowed brow,
For aye, the cypress wreath of sorrow twine;
And in thy new-formed beauty, desolate, throw
The fresh-cull'd flowers on *his* sepulchral shrine.
Yes! let that heart whose fervor was all thine,
In consecrated urn lamented be!
That generous heart where genius thrill'd divine,
Hath spent its last most glorious throb for thee—
Then sank amid the storm that made thy children free!

Britannia's Poet! Graecia's hero, sleeps!
And freedom, bending o'er the breathless clay,
Lifts up her voice, and in her anguish weeps!
For *us* a night hath clouded o'er our day,
And hushed the lips that breath'd our fairest lay.
Alas! and must the British lyre resound
A requiem, while the spirit wings away

Of him who on its strings such music found,
And taught its startling chords to give so sweet a sound!

The theme grows sadder—but my soul shall find
A language in these tears! No more—no more!
Soon, midst the shriekings of the tossing wind,
The “dark blue depths” he sang of, shall have bore
Our *all* of Byron to his native shore!

His grave is thick with voices—to the ear
Murm’ring an awful tale of greatness o’er;

But Memory strives with Death, and lingering near,
Shall consecrate the dust of Harold’s lonely bier!

—ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

LORD BYRON AND THE ARMENIAN CONVENT

And lived he here? And could this sweet green isle
Volcanic stuff to his hot heart afford,

That he might nurse his wrath, and vent his bile

On gods and men, this proud, mistempered lord?

Alas! poor lord, to this soft leafy nest

Where only pure and heavenly thoughts should dwell,

He brought, and bore and cherished in his breast,

A home-bred devil, and a native hell.

Unhappy lord! If this be genius, then

Grant me, O God, a muse with sober sweep,

That I may eat and drink with common men,

Joy with their joys, and with their weeping weep:

Better to chirp mild loves in lowly bower,

Than soar through stormy skies, with hatred for my
dower.

—JOHN STEWART BLACKIE

MEMORIAL VERSES

APRIL, 1850

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
We bow'd our head and held our breath.
He taught us little; but our soul
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.
With shivering heart the strife we saw
Of passion with eternal law
And yet with reverential awe
We watched the font of fiery life
Which served for that Titanic strife.

—MATTHEW ARNOLD

BYRON

A hundred years, 't is writ,—O presage vain!—
Earth wills her offspring life, ere one complete
His term, and rest from travail, and be fain
To lay him down in natural death and sweet.

What of her child whose swift divining soul
With triple fervor burns the torch apace,
And in one radiant third compacts the whole
Ethereal flame that lights him on his race?

Ay, what of him who to the winds upheld
A star-like brand, with pride and joy and tears,
And lived in that fleet course from youth to eld,
Count them who will, his century of years?

The Power that arches heaven's orbway round
Gave to this planet's brood its soul of fire,
Its heart of passion,—and for life unbound
By chain or creed the measureless desire;

Gave to one poet these, and manifold
High thoughts, beyond our lesser mortal share,—

Gave dreams of beauty, yes, and with a mould
The antique world had worshipped made him fair;

Then touched his lips with music,—lit his brow,
Even as a fane upon the sunward hill,
For strength, gave scorn, the pride that would not bow,
The glorious weapon of a dauntless will.

But that the surcharged spirit—a vapor pent
In beetling crags—a torrent barriered long—
A wind 'gainst heaven's four winds imminent—
Might memorably vent its noble song,

Each soaring gift was fretted with a band
That deadlier clung which way he fain would press:
His were an adverse age, a sordid land,
Gauging his heart by their own littleness;

Blind guides! the fiery spirit scorned their curb,
And Byron's love and gladness,—such the wise
Of ministrants whom evil times perturb,—
To wrath and melancholy changed their guise.

Yet this was he whose swift imaginings
Engirt fair Liberty from clime to clime,—
From Alp to ocean with an eagle's wings
Pursued her flight, in Harold's lofty rime.

Where the mind's freedom was not, could not be,
That bigot soil he rendered to disdain,
And sought, like Omar in his revelry,
At least the semblance of a joy to gain.

Laughter was at his beck, and wisdom's ruth
Sore-learned from fierce experiences that test
Life's masquerade, the carnival of youth,
The world of man. Then Folly lost her zest,

Yet left undimmed (her valediction sung
With Juan's smiles and tears) his natal ray
Of genius inextinguishably young,—
An Eos through those mists proclaiming day.

How then, when to his ear came Hellas' cry,
He shred the garlands of the wild night's feast,
And rose a chief, to lead—alas, to die
And leave men mourning for that music ceased!

America! When nations for thy knell
Listened, one prophet oracled thy part:
Now, in thy morn of strength, remember well
The bard whose chant foretold thee as thou art.

Sky, mount, and forest, and high-sounding main,
The storm-cloud's vortex, splendor of the day,
Gloom of the night,—with these abide his strain,—
And these are thine, though he has passed away;

Their elemental force had roused to might
Great Nature's child in this her realm supreme,—
From their commingling he had guessed aright
The plentitude of all we know or dream.

Read thou aright his vision and his song,
That this enfranchised spirit of the spheres
May know his name henceforth shall take no wrong,
Outbroadening still yon ocean and these years!

—EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN

BYRON'S GRAVE

Nay! Byron, nay! not under where we tread,
Dumb weight of stone, lies thine imperial head!
Into no vault lethargic, dark and dank,
The splendid strength of thy swift spirit sank:
No narrow church in precincts cold and grey

Confines the plume, that loved to breast the day:
Thy self-consuming, scathing heart of flame
Was quenched to feed no silent coffin's shame!
A fierce, glad fire in buoyant hearts art thou,
A radiance in auroral spirits now;
A stormy wind, an ever-sounding ocean,
A life, a power, a never-wearying motion!
Or deadly gloom, or terrible despair,
An earthquake mockery of strong Creeds that were
Assured possessions of calm earth and sky,
Where doom-distraught pale souls took sanctuary,
As in strong temples. The same blocks shall build,
Iconoclast! the edifice you spilled,
More durable, more fair: O scourge of God,
It was Himself who urged thee on thy road;
And thou, Don Juan, Harold, Manfred, Cain,
Song-crowned within the world's young heart shall reign!
Where'er we hear embroiled lashed ocean roar,
Or thunder echoing among heights all hoar,
Brother! thy mighty measure heightens theirs,
While Freedom on her rent red banner bears
The deathless names of many a victory won,
Inspired by thy death-shattering clarion!
In Love's immortal firmament are set
Twin stars of Romeo and Juliet,
And their companions young eyes discover
In Cycladean Haidee with her lover.

May all the devastating force be spent?
Or all thy godlike energies lie shent?
Nay! thou art founded in the strength Divine:
The soul's immense eternity is thine!
Profound Beneficence absorbs thy power,
While ages tend the long-maturing flower:
Our Sun himself, one tempest of wild flame,
For source of joy, and very life men claim
In mellowing corn, in bird, and bloom of spring,
In leaping lambs, and lovers dallying.
Byron! the whirlwinds rended not in vain;

Aloof behold they nourish and sustain!
In the far end we shall account them gain.

—RODEN NOEL

TO LORD BYRON

MY LORD,

(Do you remember how Leigh Hunt
Enraged you once by writing *My dear Byron?*)
Books have their fates,—as mortals have who punt,
And *yours* have entered on an age of iron.

Critics there be who think your satin blunt,
Your pathos, fudge: such perils must environ
Poets who in their time were quite the rage,
Though now there's not a soul to turn their page.

Yes, there is much dispute about your worth,
And much is said which you might like to know
By modern poets here upon the earth,

Where poets live, and love each other so;
And, in Elysium, it may move your mirth

To hear of bards that pitch your praises low,
Though there be some that for your credit stickle,
As—Glorious Mat,—and not inglorious Nichol.

This kind of writing is my pet aversion.

I hate the slang, I hate the personalities,
I loathe the aimless, reckless, loose dispersion,
Of every rhyme that in the singer's wallet is,
I hate it as you hated the *Excursion*,

But, while no man a hero to his valet is,
The hero's still the model; I indite
The kind of rhymes that Byron oft would write.

There's a Swiss critic whom I cannot rhyme to,

One Scherer, dry as sawdust, grim and prim.
Of him there's much to say, if I had time to

Concern myself in any wise with *him*.

He seems to hate the heights he cannot climb to,
He thinks your poetry a coxcomb's whim,
A good deal of his sawdust he has spilt on
Shakespeare, and Moliere, and you, and Milton.

Ay, much his temper is like Vivien's mood,
Which found not Galahad pure, nor Lancelot brave;
Cold as a hailstorm on an April wood,
He buries poets in an icy grave,
His Essays—he of the Genevan hood!
Nothing so good but better doth he crave.
So stupid and so solemn in his spite
He dares to print that Moliere could not write!

Enough of these excursions; I was saying
That half our English Bards are turned Reviewers,
And Arnold was discussing and assaying
The weight and value of that work of yours,
Examining and testing it and weighing,
And proved, the gems are pure, the gold endures.
While Swinburne cries with an exceeding joy,
The stones are paste, and half the gold, alloy.

In Byron, Arnold finds the greatest force,
Poetic, in this later age of ours
His song, a torrent from a mountain source,
Clear as the crystal, singing with the showers,
Sweeps to the sea in unrestricted course
Through banks o'erhung with rocks and sweet with
flowers;
None of your brooks that modestly meander,
But swift as Awe along the Pass of Brander.

And when our century has clomb its crest,
And backward gazes o'er the plains of Time,
And counts its harvest, yours is still the best,
The richest garner in the field of rhyme
(The metaphoric mixture, 't is confest,

Is all my own, and is not quite sublime).
But fame's not yours alone; you must divide all
The plums and pudding with the Bard of Rydal!

Wordsworth and Byron, these the lordly names
And these the gods to whom most incense burns.
'Absurd!' cries Swinburne, and in anger flames,
And in an Aeschylean fury spurns
With impious foot your altar, and exclaims
And wreathes his laurels on the golden urns
Where Coleridge's and Shelley's ashes lie,
Deaf to the din and heedless of the cry.

For Byron (Swinburne shouts) has never woven
One honest thread of life within his song;
As Offenbach is to divine Beethoven
So Byron is to Shelley (*This* is strong!),
And on Parnassus' peak, divinely cloven,
He may not stand, or stands by cruel wrong;
For Byron's rank (the Examiner has reckoned)
Is in the third class or a feeble second.

'A Bernesque poet' at the very most,
And never earnest save in politics—
The Pegasus that he was wont to boast
A blundering, floundering hackney, full of tricks,
A beast that must be driven to the post
By whips and spurs and oaths and kicks and sticks,
A gasping, ranting, broken-winded brute,
That any judge of Pegasi would shoot;

In sooth, a half-bred Pegasus, and far gone
In spavin, curb, and half a hundred woes.
And Byron's style is 'jolter-headed jargon';
His verse is 'only bearable in prose.'
So living poets write of those that *are* gone,
And o'er the Eagle thus the Bantam crows:
And Swinburne ends where Verisopht began,
By owning you 'a very clever man.'

Or rather does not end: he still must utter
A quantity of the unkindest things.
Ah! were you here, I marvel, would you flutter
O'er such a foe the tempest of your wings?
'Tis 'rant and cant and glare and splash and splutter'
That rend the modest air when Byron sings.
There Swinburne stops: a critic rather fiery.
Animis caelestibus tantaene irae?

But whether he or Arnold in the right is,
Long is the argument, the quarrel long;
Non nobis est to settle *tantas lites*;
No poet I, to judge of right or wrong:
But of all things I always think a fight is
The *most* unpleasant in the lists of song;
When Marsyas of old was flayed, Apollo
Set an example which we need not follow.
The fashion changes! Maidens do not wear,
As once they wore, in necklaces and locketts
A curl ambrosial of Lord Byron's hair;
'Don Juan' is not always in our pockets—
Nay, a New Writer's readers do not care
Much for your verse, but are inclined to mock its
Manners and morals. Ay, and most young ladies
To yours prefer the 'Epic' called 'of Hades!'

I do not blame them; I'm inclined to think
That with the reigning taste 't is vain to quarrel,
And Burns might teach his votaries to drink,
And Byron never meant to make them moral.
You yet have lovers true, who will not shrink
From lauding you and giving you the laurel;
The Germans too, those men of blood and iron,
Of all our poets chiefly swear by Byron.

Farewell, thou Titan fairer than the gods!
Farewell, farewell, thou swift and lovely spirit,
Thou splendid warrior with the world at odds,

Unpraised, unpraisable, beyond thy merit;
Chased, like Orestes, by the furies' rods,

Like him at length thy peace dost thou inherit;
Beholding whom, men think how fairer far
Than all the steadfast stars the wandering star!*

—ANDREW LANG

TO BYRON

He with a strenuous voice of vibrant tone,
Aeolian in its sweep and majesty,
Untrammelled as the heavens, and as free,
In passionate throbbings from his bosom's throne
Flung Song from the Aegeans classic zone
Sublime in its impetuosity,—
Like to the voice of the eternal sea
Filled with a wild unfathomable moan.

O Dust! far from the Minster by the Thames,
Reft of the oriel and the organ roll,
Unnicked among thy land's illustrious names,
Where is he, living, who can touch thy goal?
Whose words, as thine, within the file of Fames'
Resplendent troop, so melt, so move the soul!

—LLOYD MIFFLIN

*Mr. Swinburne's and Mr. Arnold's diverse views of Byron will be found in the *Selections* by Mr. Arnold and in the *Nineteenth Century*.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
1792—1822



PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

AFTER A LECTURE ON SHELLEY

One broad, white sail in Spezzia's treacherous bay;
On comes the blast; too daring bark, beware!
The cloud has clasped her; lo! it melts away;
The wide, waste waters, but no sail is there.

Morning: a woman looking on the sea;
Midnight: with lamps the long veranda burns;
Come, wandering sail, they watch, they burn for thee!
Suns come and go, alas! no bark returns.

And feet are thronging on the pebbly sands,
And torches flaring in the weedy caves,
Where'er the waters lay with icy hands
The shapes uplifted from their coral graves.

Vainly they seek; the idle quest is o'er;
The coarse, dark women, with their hanging locks,
And lean, wild children gather from the shore
To the black hovels bedded in the rocks.

But Love still prayed, with agonizing wail,
"One, one last look, ye heaving waters, yield!"
Till Ocean, clashing in his jointed mail,
Raised the pale burden on his level shield.

Slow from the shore the sullen waves retire;
His form a nobler element shall claim;
Nature baptized him in ethereal fire,
And Death shall crown him with a wreath of flame.

Fade, mortal semblance, never to return;
Swift is the change with thy crimson shroud;
Seal the white ashes in the peaceful urn;
All else has risen in yon silvery cloud.

Sleep where thy gentle Adonais lies,
Whose open page lay on thy dying heart,

Both in the smile of those blue-vaulted skies,
Earth's fairest dome of all divinest art.

Breathe for his wandering soul one passing sigh,
O happier Christian, while thine eye grows dim,—
In all the mansions of the house on high,
Say not that Mercy has not one for him!

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

(From)

PAULINE

Sun-treader, life and light be thine forever!
Thou art gone from us; years go by and spring
Gladdens and the young earth is beautiful,
Yet thy songs come not, other bards arise,
But none like thee: they stand, thy majesties,
Like mighty works which tell some spirit there
Hath sat regardless of neglect and scorn,
Till, its long task completed, it hath risen
And left us, never to return, and all
Rush in to peer and praise when all in vain.
The air seems bright with thy past presence yet,
But thou art still for me as thou hast been
When I have stood with thee as on a throne
With all thy dim creations gathered round
Like mountains, and I felt of mould like them,
And with them creatures of my own were mixed,
Like things half-lived, catching and giving life.
But thou art still for me who have adored
Though single, panting but to hear thy name
Which I believed a spell to me alone,
Scarce deeming thou wast as a star to men!
As one should worship long a sacred spring
Scarce worth a moth's flitting, which long grasses cross,
And one small tree embowers droopingly—
Joying to see some wandering insect won
To live in its few rushes, or some locust

To pasture on its boughs, or some wild bird
Stoop for its freshness from the trackless air:
And then should find it but the fountain-head,
Long lost, of some great river washing towns
And towers, and seeing old woods which will live
But by its banks untrod of human foot,
Which, when the great sun sinks, lie quivering
In light as some thing lieth half of life
Before God's foot, waiting a wondrous change;
Then girt with rocks which seek to turn or stay
Its course in vain, for it does ever spread
Like a sea's arm as it goes rolling on,
Being the pulse of some great country—so
Wast thou to me, and art thou to the world!
And I, perchance, half feel a strange regret
That I am not what I have been to thee:
Like a girl one has silently loved long
In her first loneliness in some retreat,
When, late emerged, all gaze and glow to view
Her fresh eyes and soft hair and lips which bloom
Like a mountain berry: doubtless it is sweet
To see her thus adored, but there have been
Moments when all the world was in our praise,
Sweeter than any pride of after hours.
Yet, sun-treader, all hail! From my heart's heart
I bid thee hail! E'en in my wildest dreams,
I proudly feel I would have thrown to dust
The wreaths of fame which seemed o'erhanging me,
To see thee for a moment as thou art.
And if thou livest, if thou lovest, spirit!
Remember me who set this final seal
To wandering thought—that one so pure as thou
Could never die. Remember me who flung
All honor from my soul, yet paused and said,
“There is one spark of love remaining yet,
For I have naught in common with him, shapes
Which followed him avoid me, and foul forms
Seek me, which ne'er could fasten on his mind;

And though I feel how low I am to him,
Yet I aim not even to catch a tone
Of harmonies he called profusely up;
So, one gleam still remains, although the last."
Remember me who praise thee e'en with tears,
For never more shall I walk calm with thee;
Thy sweet imaginings are as an air,
A melody some wondrous singer sings,
Which, though it haunt men oft in the still eve,
They dream not to essay; yet it no less
But more is honored. I was thine in shame,
And now when all thy proud renown is out,
I am a watcher whose eyes have grown dim
With looking for some star which breaks on him
Altered and worn and weak and full of tears.

—ROBERT BROWNING

ODE TO SHELLEY

I

Why art thou dead? Upon the hills once more
The golden mist of waning Autumn lies;
The slow-pulsed billows wash along the shore,
And phantom isles are floating in the skies.
They wait for thee: a spirit in the sand
Hushes, expectant for thy coming tread;
The light wind pants to lift thy trembling hair;
Inward, the silent land
Lies with its mournful wood;—why art thou dead,
When Earth demands that thou shalt call her fair?

II

Why art thou dead? I too demand thy song,
To speak the language yet denied to mine,

Twin-doomed with thee, to feel the scorn of Wrong,
To worship Beauty as a thing divine!
Thou art afar: wilt thou not soon return
To tell me that which thou hast never told?
To clasp my throbbing hand, and, by the shore
Or dewy mountain-fern,
Pour out thy heart as to a friend of old,
Touched with a twilight sadness? Nevermore.

III

I could have told thee all the sylvan joy
Of trackless woods; the meadows far apart,
Within whose fragrant grass, a lonely boy,
I thought of God; the trumpet at my heart,
When on bleak mountains roared the midnight storm,
And I was bathed in lightning, broad and grand:
Oh, more than all, with soft and reverent breath
And forehead flushing warm,
I would have led thee through the summer land
Of early Love, and past my dreams of Death!

IV

In thee, Immortal Brother! had I found
That Voice of Earth, that fails my feebler lines:
The awful speech of Rome's sepulchral ground;
The dusky hymn of Vallombrossa's pines!
From thee the noise of Ocean would have taken
A grand defiance round the moveless shores,
And vocal grown the Mountain's silent head:
Canst thou not yet awaken
Beneath the funeral cypress? Earth implores
Thy presence for her son;—why art thou dead?

V

I do but rave: for it is better thus,
Were once thy starry nature given to mine,
In the one life which would encircle us
My voice would melt, my soul be lost in thine.

Better to bear the far sublimer pain

Of Thought that has not ripened into speech,
To hear in silence Truth and Beauty sing

Divinely to the brain;

For thus the Poet at the last shall reach
His own soul's voice, nor crave a brother's string.

—BAYARD TAYLOR

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

(INSCRIPTION FOR THE COUCH, STILL PRESERVED,
ON WHICH HE PASSED THE LAST NIGHT OF HIS LIFE)

'Twixt those twin worlds,—the world of Sleep, which
gave

No dream to warm,—the tidal world of Death,

Which the earth's sea, as the earth, replenisheth,—
Shelley, Song's orient sun, to breast the wave,
Rose from this couch that morn. Ah! did he brave

Only the sea?—or did man's deed of hell

Engulph his bark 'mid mists impenetrable? * * *
No eye discerned, nor any power might save.

When that mist cleared, O Shelley! what dread veil
Was rent for thee, to whom far-darkling Truth
Reigned sovereign guide through thy brief ageless
youth?

Was the Truth *thy* Truth, Shelley?—Hush! All-Hail,
Past doubt, thou gav'st it; and in Truth's bright
sphere

Art first of praisers, being most praised here.

—DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

THE POETRY OF SHELLEY

See'st thou a Skylark whose glistening winglets
ascending

Quiver like pulses beneath the melodious dawn?
Deep in the heart-yearning distance of heaven it
flutters—

Wisdom and beauty and love are the treasures it brings
down at eve.

—GEORGE MEREDITH

SHELLEY

The odor of a rose: light of a star:
The essence of a flame blown on by wind,
That lights and warms all near it, bland and kind,
But aye consumes itself, as though at war
With what supports and feeds it;—from afar
It draws its life, but evermore inclin'd
To leap into the flame that makes men blind
Who seek the secret of all things that are.
Such wert thou, Shelley, bound for airiest goal:
Interpreter of quintessential things:
Who mounted ever up on eagle-wings
Of phantasy: had aim'd at heaven and stole
Promethean fire for men to be as gods,
And dwell in free, aerial abodes.

—ALEXANDER HAY JAPP

SHELLEY

Shelley, the ceaseless music of thy soul
Breathes in the Cloud and in the Skylark's song,
That float as an embodied dream along
The dewy lids of morning. In the dole
That haunts the West Wind, in the joyous roll
Of Arethusan fountains, or among
The wastes where Ozymandias the strong

Lies in colossal ruin, thy control
Speaks in the wedded rhyme. Thy spirit gave
A fragrance to all nature, and a tone
To inexpressive silence. Each apart—
Earth, Air, and Ocean—claims thee as its own;
The twain that bred thee, and the panting wave
That clasped thee, like an overflowing heart.
—JOHN B. TABB

TO SHELLEY

At Shelley's birth,
The Lark, dawn spirit, with an anthem loud
Rose from the dusky earth
To tell it to the Cloud,
That, like a flower night-folded in the gloom,
Burst into morning bloom.

At Shelly's death,
The Sea, that deemed him an immortal, saw
A god's extinguished breath,
and landward, as in awe,
Upbore him to the altar whence he came,
And the enkindling flame.

—JOHN B. TABB

SHELLEY'S CENTENARY

(4TH AUGUST, 1892)

Within a narrow span of time,
Three princes of the realm of rhyme,
At height of youth or manhood's prime,
From earth took wing,
To join the fellowship sublime
Who, dead, yet sing.

He, first, his earliest wreath who wove
Of laurel grown in Latmian grove,

Conquered by pain and hapless love
Found calmer home,
Roofed by the heaven that glows above
Eternal Rome.

A fierier soul, its own fierce prey,
And cumbered with more mortal clay,
At Missolonghi flamed away,
And left the air
Reverberating to this day
Its loud despair.

Alike remote from Byron's scorn,
And Keats' magic as of morn
Bursting for ever newly-born
On forests old,
Waking a hoary world forlorn
With touch of gold,

Shelley, the cloud-begot, who grew
Nourished on air and sun and dew,
Into that Essence whence he drew
His life and lyre
Was fittingly resolved anew
Through wave and fire.

'Twas like his rapid soul! 'Twas meet
That he, who brooked not Time's slow feet,
With passage thus abrupt and fleet
Should hurry hence,
Eager the Great Perhaps to greet
With Why? and Whence?

Impatient of the world's fixed way,
He ne'er could suffer God's delay,
But all the future in a day
Would build divine,
And the whole past in ruins lay,
An emptied shrine.

Vain vision! but the glow, the fire,
The passion of benign desire,
The glorious yearning, lift him higher
 Than many a soul
That mounts a million paces nigher
 Its meaner goal.

And power is his, if naught besides,
In that thin ether where he rides,
Above the roar of human tides
 To ascend afar,
Lost in a storm of light that hides
 His dizzy car.

Below, the unhastening world toils on,
And here and there are victories won,
Some dragon slain, some justice done,
 While, through the skies,
A meteor rushing on the sun,
 He flares and dies.

But, as he cleaves yon ether clear
Notes from the unattempted Sphere
He scatters to the enchanted ear
 Of earth's dim throng,
Whose dissonance doth more endear
 The showering song.

In other shapes than he forecast
The world is moulded: his fierce blast,—
His wild assault upon the Past,—
 These things are vain;
Revolt is transient: what *must* last
 Is that pure strain.

Which seems the wandering voices blent,
Of every virgin element,—
A sound from ocean caverns sent,—

An airy call
From the pavillioned firmament
O'erdoming all.

And in this world of worldlings, where
Souls rust in apathy, and ne'er
A great emotion shakes the air,
And life flags tame,
And rare is noble impulse, rare
The impassioned aim,

'Tis no mean fortune to have heard
A singer who, if errors blurred
His sight, had yet a spirit stirred
By vast desire,
And ardour fledging the swift word
With plumes of fire.

A creature of impetuous breath,
Our torpor deadlier than death
He knew not; whatso'er he saith
Flashes with life:
He spurreth men, he quickeneth
To splendid strife.

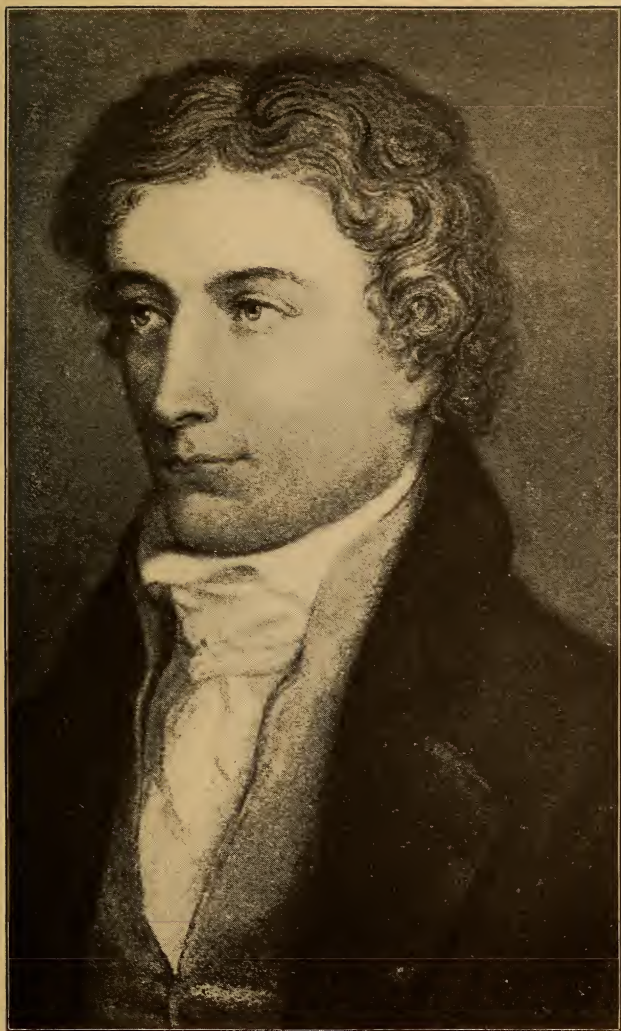
And in his gusts of song he brings
Wild odours shaken from strange wings,
And unfamiliar whisperings
From far lips blown,
While all the rapturous heart of things
Throbs through his own,—

His own that from the burning pyre
One who had loved his wind swept lyre
Out of the sharp teeth of the fire
Unmolten drew,
Beside the sea that in her ire
Smote him and slew.

—WILLIAM WATSON

JOHN KEATS

1795-1821



JOHN KEATS

FRAGMENT ON KEATS

WHO DESIRED THAT ON HIS TOMB SHOULD BE INSCRIBED—

'Here lieth One whose name was writ on water.'

But, ere the breath that could erase it blew,
Death, in remorse for that fell slaughter,
Death, the immortalizing winter, flew
Athwart the stream,—and time's printless torrent
grew

A scroll of crystal, blazoning the name
Of Adonais!

—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

(*From*)

ADONAIS—AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS.

XL

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain—
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

XLII

He is made one with Nature; there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

XLIII

He is a portion of the loveliness

Which once he made more lovely; he doth bear
His part, while the One Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling
there,

All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the heaven's light.

XLIV

The splendours of the firmament of time

May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

XLV

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown

Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale,—his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell and as he lived and loved
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose; and Lucan, by his death approved:
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reprov'd.

XLVI

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
'Thou art become as one of us', they cry,
'It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.
Assume thy winged throne, thou vesper of our throng.'

XLVII

Who mourns for Adonais? Oh, come forth,
Fond wretch! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Sate the void circumference; then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

XLVIII

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
Oh, not of him, but of our joy: 'tis nought
That ages, empires, and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend,—they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

XLIX

Go thou to Rome,—at once the paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolations' nakedness
Pass, till the spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread;

L

And gray walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished
breath.

LI

Here pause; these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its change to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

LII

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light for ever shines, earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

LIII

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my heart?
Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is past from the revolving year,
And man, and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! Oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

LIV

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst; now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

—PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

SONNET

WRITTEN IN KEATS'S 'ENDYMION'

I saw pale Dian, sitting by the brink
Of silver falls, the overflow of fountains
From cloudy steeps; and I grew sad to think
Endymion's foot was silent on those mountains,
And he but a hush'd name, that Silence keeps
In dear remembrance,—lonely, and forlorn,
Singing it to herself until she weeps
Tears that perchance still glisten in the morn;—
And as I mused, in dull imaginings,
There came a flash of garments, and I knew
The awful Muse by her harmonious wings
Charming the air to music as she flew—
Anon there rose an echo through the vale,
Gave back Endymion in a dream-like tale.

—THOMAS HOOD

KEATS*

The young Endymion sleeps Endymion's sleep;
The shepherd-boy whose tale was left half told!
The solemn grove uplifts its shield of gold
To the red rising moon, and loud and deep
The nightingale is singing from the steep;
It is midsummer, but the air is cold;

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Can it be death? Alas, beside the fold
A shepherd's pipe lies shattered near his sheep.
Lo! in the moonlight gleams a marble white,
On which I read: "Here lieth one whose name
Was writ in water." And was this the meed
Of his sweet singing? Rather let me write:
"The smoking flax before it burst to flame
Was quenched by death, and broken the bruised reed."
—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

AFTER A LECTURE ON KEATS
"PURPUREOS SPARGAM FLORES"

The wreath that star-crowned Shelley gave
Is lying on thy Roman grave,
Yet on its turf young April sets
Her store of slender violets;
Though all the Gods their garlands shower,
I too may bring one purple flower
—Alas! what blossom shall I bring,
That opens in my Northern spring?
The garden beds have all run wild,
So trim when I was yet a child;
Flat plantains and unseemly stalks
Have crept across the gravel walks;
The vines are dead, long, long ago,
The almond buds no longer blow.
No more upon its mound I see
The azure, plume-bound fleur-de-lis;
Where once the tulips used to show,
In straggling tufts the pansies grow;
The grass has quenched my white-rayed gem,
The flowering "Star of Bethlehem,"
Though its long blade of glossy green
And pallid stripe may still be seen.
Nature, who treads her nobles down,
And gives their birthright to the clown,
Has sown her base-born weedy things
Above the garden's queens and kings.

—Yet one sweet flower of ancient race
 Springs in the old familiar place.
 When snows were melting down the vale,
 And Earth unlaced her icy mail,
 And March his stormy trumpet blew,
 And tender green came peeping through,
 I loved the earliest one to seek
 That broke the soil with emerald beak,
 And watch the trembling bells so blue
 Spread on the column as it grew.
 Meek child of earth! thou wilt not shame
 The sweet, dead poet's holy name;
 The God of music gave thee birth,
 Called from the crimson-spotted earth,
 Where, sobbing his young life away,
 His own fair Hyacinthus lay.
 —The hyacinth my garden gave
 Shall lie upon that Roman grave!
 —OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

(From)

AURORA LEIGH

By Keats's soul, the man who never stepped
 In gradual progress like another man,
 But, turning grandly on his central self,
 Ensphered himself in twenty perfect years,
 And died, not young (the life of a long life
 Distilled to a mere drop, falling like a tear
 Upon the world's cold cheek to make it burn
 Forever).

—ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

TO THE SPIRIT OF KEATS

Great soul, thou sittest with me in my room,
Uplifting me with thy vast, quiet eyes,
On whose full orbs, with kindly lustre, lies
The twilight warmth of ruddy ember-gloom:
Thy clear, strong tones will oft bring sudden bloom
Of hope secure, to him who lonely cries,
Wrestling with the young poet's agonies,
Neglect and scorn, which seem a certain doom:
Yes! the few words which, like great thunder-drops,
Thy large heart down to earth shook doubtfully,
Thrilled by the inward lightning of its might,
Serene and pure, like gushing joy of light,
Shall track the eternal chords of Destiny,
After the moon-led pulse of ocean stops.

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

TO THE MEMORY OF KEATS

(ON COMING INTO POSSESSION OF HIS COPY
OF "THE ROGUE: OR GUZMAN DE AL-
FARACHE." LONDON, 1634)²

Great Father mine, deceased ere I was born,
And in a classic land renowned of old;
Thy life was happy, but thy death forlorn,
Buried in violets and Roman mold.
Thou hast the Laurel, Master of my soul!
Thy name, thou saidst, was writ in water—No,
For while clouds float on high, and billows roll,
Thy name shall worshipped be. Will mine be so?
I kiss thy words as I would kiss thy face,
And put thy book most reverently away.
Girt by thy peers, thou hast an honored place,
Among the kingliest—Byron, Wordsworth, Gray.

If tears will fill mine eyes, am I to blame?
"O smile away the shades, for this is fame!"

—RICHARD HENRY STODDARD

JOHN KEATS

The weltering London ways where children weep
And girls whom none call maidens laugh,—
 strange road

Miring his outward steps, who inly trode
The bright Castalian brink and Latmos' steep:—
Even such his life's cross-paths; till deathly deep
 He toiled through sands of lethe; and long pain,
 Weary with labor spurned and love found vain,
In dead Rome's sheltering shadow wrapped his sleep.

O pang-dowered Poet, whose reverberant lips
And heart-strung lyre awoke the Moon's eclipse,—
 Thou whom the daisies glory in growing o'er,—
Their fragrance clings around thy name, not writ
But rumor'd in water, while the fame of it
 Along Time's flood goes echoing evermore.

—DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

THE POETRY OF KEATS

The song of a nightingale sent thro' a slumbrous valley,
Low-lidded with twilight, and tranced with the
 dolorous sound,
Tranced with a tender enchantment; the yearn-
 ing of passion
That wins immortality even while panting delirious
 with death.

—GEORGE MEREDITH

AN INSCRIPTION IN ROME*

(PIAZZA DI SPAGNA)

Something there is in Death not all unkind,
He hath a gentler aspect, looking back;
For flowers may bloom in the dread thunder's track,
And even the cloud that struck with light was lined.
Thus, when the heart is silent, speaks the mind;
But there are moments when comes rushing, black
And fierce upon us, the old, awful lack,
And Death once more is cruel, senseless, blind.
So when I saw beside a Roman portal
"In this house died John Keats"—for tears that sprung
I could no further read. O bard immortal!
Not for thy fame's sake—but so young, so young;
Such beauty vanished, spilled such heavenly wine,
All quenched that power of deathless song divine!
—RICHARD WATSON GILDER

KEATS*

Touch not with dark regret his perfect fame,
Sighing, "Had he but lived he had done so;"
Or, "Were his heart not eaten out with woe
John Keats had won a prouder, mightier name!"
Take him for what he was and did—nor blame
Blind fate for all he suffered. Thou shouldst know
Souls such as his escape no mortal blow—
No agony of joy, or sorrow, or shame!
"Whose name was writ in water!" What large
laughter
Among the immortals when that word was brought!
Then when his fiery spirit rose flaming after
High toward the topmost heaven of heavens up-caught!
"All hail! our younger brother!" Shakespeare said,
And Dante nodded his imperial head.

—RICHARD WATSON GILDER

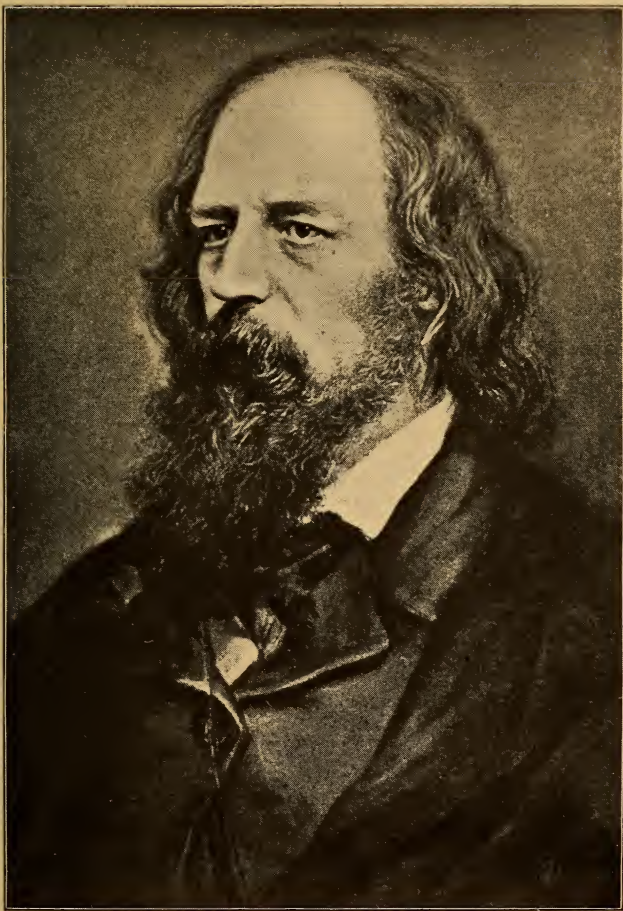
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KEATS

Rare voice, the last from vernal Hellas sent,
And fresh Arcadian hills, why mute so soon?
Did the Gods grudge their unexpected boon,
And Phoebus envy back the lute he lent?
So sudden came thy song, so sudden went!
O well for thee—free of life's fiery noon,
Free as a fairy underneath the moon,
But ill for us bereft of ravishment.
Not for our skies, piper of Grecian breed,
Nor suits our autumn melody with spring's;
So hast thou fled on bright ethereal steed
With all thy young and rich imaginings
To be great-hearted Homer's Ganymede,
Nor dropped one feather of thy shining wings.
—ERASMUS HENRY BRODIE

ALFRED TENNYSON

1809—1892



ALFRED TENNYSON

TO ALFRED TENNYSON

Long have I known thee as thou art in song,
And long enjoy'd the perfume that exhales
From thy pure soul, and odour sweet entails
And permanence, on thoughts that float along
The stream of life, to join the passive throng
Of shades and echoes that are memory's being
Hearing we hear not, and we see not seeing,
If passion, fancy, faith move not among
The never-present moments of reflection.
Long have I view'd thee in the crystal sphere
Of verse, that, like the beryl, makes appear
Visions of hope, begot of recollection.
Knowing thee now, a real earth-treading man,
Not less I love thee, and no more I can.

—HARTLEY COLERIDGE

WAPENTAKE

TO ALFRED TENNYSON*

Poet! I come to touch thy lance with mine;
Not as a knight, who on the listed field
Of tourney touched his adversary's shield
In token of defiance, but in sign
Of homage to the mastery, which is thine,
In English song; nor will I keep concealed,
And voiceless as a rivulet frost-congealed,
My admiration for thy verse divine.
Not of the howling dervishes of song,
Who craze the brain with their delirious dance,
Art thou, O sweet historian of the heart!
Therefore to thee the laurel-leaves belong,
To thee our love and our allegiance,
For thy allegiance to the poet's art.

—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

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ALFRED TENNYSON

I

THE LAND'S VIGIL

How many a face throughout the Imperial Isle,
From Kentish shores to Scottish hill or hall,
From Cambrian vales to Windsor's royal pile,
Turned sadly towards one House more sad than all,—
Turned day by day, fear-blanced! When evening's
pall

Shrouded a day that scarce had heart to smile,
How oft sad eyes, spelled by one thought the
while,
Not seeing, seemed to see a taper small,

Night after night, flashed from one casement high!
Let these men sing his praise! Others there are
Who fitlier might have sung them in old time,
Since they loved best who loved him in his prime.
Their youth, and his, expired long since and far.
Now he is gone, it seems "again to die."

II

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

'Tis well! Not always nations are ingrate!
He gave his country "of his best;" and she
Gave to her bard in glorious rivalry
Her whole great heart. A People and a State
Had met, through love a tomb to consecrate.
In the Abbey old each order and degree
Low knelt, and upward gazing seemed to see,
Not that dark vault, but Heaven's expanding gate.

O'er him the death-song he had made they sung:—
Thus, when in Rome the Prince of Painters died,
His Art's last marvel o'er his bier was hung,
At once in heavenly hope and honest pride:
Thus England honoured him she loved that day;
Thus many prayed—as England's Saints will pray.

III

THE POET

None sang of Love more nobly; few so well;
Of Friendship none with pathos so profound;
Of Duty sternliest-proved when myrtle-crowned;
Of English grove and rivulet, mead and dell;
Great Arthur's Legend he alone dared tell;
Milton and Dryden feared to tread that ground;
For him alone o'er Camelot's faery bound
The "horns of Elf-land" blew their magic spell.

Since Shakespeare and since Wordsworth none hath
sung
So well his England's greatness; none hath given
Reproof more fearless or advice more sage.
None inlier taught how near to earth is Heaven;
With what vast concords Nature's harp is strung;
How base false pride; faction's fanatic rage.

IV

THE REWARD

The land, whose loveliness in verse of thine
Shows lovelier yet than prank'd on Nature's page,
Shall prove thy poet, in some future age
Sing thee, her Poet not in measured line
Or metric stave, but music more benign;
Shall point to British Galahads who wage

Battle on Wrong; to British maids who gage,
Like Agnes, heart and hope to Love divine.

Worn men, like thy Ulysses, scorning fear,
Shall tempt strange seas beneath an alien star;
Old men, from cherished haunts and households
dear
Summoned by death to realms unknown and far,
Thy "Silent Voices" from on high shall hear,—
With happier auspice cross thy "harbour bar."
—AUBREY DE VERE

TENNYSON

The larks of song that high o'erhead
Sung joyous in my boyhood's sky,
Save one, are with the silent dead,
Those larks that knew to soar so high.

But still with ever surer flight,
One singer of unfailing trust
Chants at the gates of morn and night
Great songs that lift us from the dust.

And heavenward call tired hearts that grieve,
Beneath the vast horizon given
With larger breadth of morn and eve,
To this one lark alone in heaven.

—S. WEIR MITCHELL

TO LORD TENNYSON

ON HIS EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY
AUGUST 6, 1889

Master and seer! too swift on noiseless feet
Thy hurrying decades fleet with stealthy pace;
Yet not the less thy voice is clear and sweet,

And still thy genius mingles strength with grace.
On thy broad brow alone and reverend face
Thy fourscore winters show, not on thy mind.
Stay, Time, a little while thy head-long chase!
Or passing, one Immortal leave behind;
For we are weak, and changeful as the wind.

For him long since the dying swan would sing,
The dead soul pine in splendid misery.
He winged the legend of the blameless King,
And crossed to Lotusland the enchanted sea;
Heard the twin voices strive for mastery,
Faithful and faithless; and with prescient thought
Saw Woman rising in the days to be
To heights of knowledge in the past unsought;
These his eye marked, and those his wisdom taught.

And he it was whose musing ear o'erheard
The love-tale sweet in death and madness end;
Who sang the deathless dirge, whose every word
Fashions a golden statue for his friend.
May all good things his waning years attend
Who told of Rizpah mourning for her dead!
Or in verse sweet as pitying ruth could lend
The childish sufferer on her hopeless bed;
Thoughts, pure and high, of precious fancy bred.

His it is to scan with patient eye
The book of Nature, writ with herb and tree;
The buds of March unfold, the lush flowers die,
When sighs of Autumn wail o'er land and sea,
And those great orbs which wheel from age to age,
Cold, unregarding fires that seem to blight
All yearning hope and chill all noble rage;
And yet were dead, and void, maybe, of light,
Till first they swam upon a mortal's sight.

Master and friend, stay yet, for there is none
Worthy to take thy place to-day, or wear
Thy laurel when thy singing-days are done.
As yet the halls of song are mute and bare,
Nor voice melodious wakes the tuneless air,
Save some weak faltering accents faintly heard.
Stay with us; 'neath thy spell the world grows
fair.

Our hearts revive, our inmost souls are stirred,
And all our English race awaits thy latest word!

—SIR LEWIS MORRIS

TENNYSON*

I

Shakespeare and Milton—what third blazoned
name

Shall lips of after-ages link to these?

His who, beside the wild encircling seas,
Was England's voice with one acclaim,
For threescore years; whose word of praise was
fame,

Whose scorn gave pause to man's iniquities.

II

What strain was his in that Crimean war?

A bugle-call in battle; a low breath,
Plaintive and sweet, above the fields of
death!

So year by year the music rolled afar,
From Euxine wastes to flowery Kandahar,
Bearing the laurel or the cypress wreath.

III

Others shall have their little space of time,
Their proper niche and bust, then fade away
Into the darkness, poets of a day;

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But thou, O builder of enduring rhyme,
Thou shalt not pass! Thy fame in every clime
On earth shall live where Saxon speech has sway.

IV

Waft me this verse across the winter sea,
Through light and dark, through mist and blind-
ing sleet,

O winter winds, and lay it at his feet;
Though the poor gift betray my poverty,
At his feet lay it: it may chance that he
Will find no gift, where reverence is, unmeet.

—THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

IN MEMORIAM, 1892

No more our Nightingale shall sing his lay;
The groves are mute, for he has taken flight;
He whose mellifluous voice was our delight
Has, by his death, brought sorrow and dismay.
There is a beauty gone from out the day;
There is a planet fallen from the night;
A splendor is withdrawn from out our sight,
A glory now for ever passed away.
A thousand hearts unused to bleed have bled,
And drops of pity dim the hard world's eye;
And oh, what memories of the day-spring fled!
What vanished hopes,—what first love's ecstasy!
Ah, we have lost what time can ne'er supply,
For now the Poet of our Youth is dead!

—LLOYD MIFFLIN

TO ALFRED TENNYSON

They told me in their shadowy phrase,
Caught from a tale gone by,
That Arthur, King of Cornish praise,
Died not, and would not die.

Dreams had they, that in fairy bowers
Their living warrior lies,
Or wears a garland of the flowers
That grow in Paradise.

I read the rune with deeper ken,
And thus the myth I trace:—
A bard should rise, mid future men,
The mightiest of his race.

He would great Arthur's deeds rehearse
On gray Dundagel's shore;
And so the King in laurell'd verse
Shall live, and die no more!

—ROBERT STEPHEN HAWKER

TENNYSON

IN LUCEM TRANSITUS

OCTOBER, 1892

From the misty shores of midnight, touched
with splendours of the moon,
To the singing tides of heaven, and the light
more clear than noon,
Passed a soul that grew to music till it was with
God in tune.

Brother of the greatest poets, true to nature,
true to art;
Lover of Immortal Love, uplifter of the human
heart;

Who shall cheer us with high music, who shall
sing, if thou depart?
Silence here—for love is silent, gazing on the
lessening sail;
Silence here—for grief is voiceless when the
mighty minstrels fail;
Silence here—but far beyond us, many voices
crying, Hail!

—HENRY VAN DYKE

IN MEMORIAM—ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Last left of the mortal Immortals, art thou too taken at
last,
Loved part so long of the present, must thou too pass to
the past?
Thou hast lain in the moonlight and lapsed in a glory from
rest into rest,
And still is the teeming brain, and the warm heart cold
in the breast,
And frozen the exquisite fancy, and mute the magical
tongue,
From our century's tuneful morn to its hushing eve that
had sung.
Crowned poet and crown of poets, whose wealth and whose
wit could combine
Great echoes of old-world Homer, the grandeur of Milton's
line,
The sad sweet glamour of Virgil, the touch of Horace
divine,
Theocritus' musical sigh, and Catullus daintily fine!
Poet of Art and of Nature, of sympathies old and new,
Who read in the earth and the heavens, the fair and the
good and the true,
And who wrote no line and no word that the world will
ever rue!
Singer of God and of men, the stars were touched by thy
brow,

But thy feet were on English meadows, true singer of
England thou!
We lose thee from sight, but thy brothers with honour
receive thee now,
From earliest Chaucer and Spenser to those who were
nearer allied,
The rainbow radiance of Shelley, and Byron's furious
pride,
Rich Keats and austere Wordsworth, and Browning who
yesterday died
By sunny channels of Venice, and Arnold from Thames'
green side.
Knells be rung, and wreaths be strung, and dirges be sung
for the laurelled hearse,
Our tears and our flowers fade scarce more fast than our
transient verse,
For even as the refluent crowds from the glorious Abbey
disperse,
They are all forgotten, and we go back to our fleeting
lives;
But we are the dying, and thou the living, whose work
survives,
The sum and the brief of our time, to report to the after
years
Its thoughts and its loves and its hopes and its doubts
and its faiths and its fears;
They live in thy lines forever, and well may our era rejoice
To speak to the ages to come with so sweet and so noble
a voice.

—T. HERBERT WARREN

TENNYSON

(WESTMINSTER ABBEY: OCTOBER 12, 1892)

GIB DIESEN TODTEN MIR HERAUS!*

(The Minster speaks)

Bring me my dead!
To me that have grown,
Stone laid upon stone,
As the stormy brood
Of English blood
Has wax'd and spread
And fill'd the world,
With sails unfurl'd;
With men that may not lie;
With thoughts that cannot die.

Bring me my dead!
Into the storied hall,
Where I have garner'd all
My harvest without weed;
My chosen fruits of goodly seed,
And lay him gently down among
The men of state, the men of song:
The men that would not suffer wrong:
The thought-worn chieftains of the mind:
Head-servants of the human kind.

Bring me my dead!
The autumn sun shall shed
Its beams athwart the bier's
Heap'd blooms: a many tears
Shall flow; his words, in cadence sweet and strong,
Shall voice the full hearts of the silent throng.
Bring me my dead!

*Don Carlos.

And oh! sad wedded mourner, seeking still
For vanish'd hand clasp: drinking in thy fill
Of holy grief; forgive, that pious theft
Robs thee of all, save memories, left:
Not thine to kneel beside the grassy mound
While dies the western glow; and all around
Is silence; and the shadows closer creep
And whisper softly: All must fall asleep.

—THOMAS HENRY HURLEY

TO LORD TENNYSON

(WITH A VOLUME OF VERSE)

Master and mage, our prince of song, whom Time,
In this your autumn mellow and serene,
Crowns ever with fresh laurels, nor less green
Than garlands dewy from your verdurous prime;
Heir of the riches of the whole world's rhyme,
Dow'r'd with the Doric grace, the Mantuan mien,
With Arno's depth and Avon's golden sheen;
Singer to whom the singing ages climb,
Convergent;—if the youngest of the choir
May snatch a flying splendour from your name
Making his page illustrious, and aspire
For one rich moment your regard to claim,
Suffer him at your feet to lay his lyre
And touch the skirts and fringes of your fame.

—WILLIAM WATSON

LACHRYMAE MUSARUM

Low, like another's, lies the laurelled head:
The life that seemed a perfect song is o'er:
Carry the last great bard to his last bed.
Land that he loved, thy noblest voice is mute.
Land that he loved, that loved him! nevermore
Meadow of thine, smooth lawn or wild sea-shore,
Gardens of odorous bloom and tremulous fruit,

Or woodlands old, like Druid couches spread,
The master's feet shall tread.
Death's little rift hath rent the faultless lute:
The singer of undying songs is dead.

Lo, in this season pensive-hued and grave,
While fades and falls the doomed, reluctant leaf
From withered Earth's fantastic coronal,
With wandering sighs of forest and of wave
Mingles the murmur of a people's grief
For him whose leaf shall fade not, neither fall.
He hath fared forth, beyond these suns and showers.
For us, the autumn glow, the autumn flame,
And soon the winter silence shall be ours:
Him the eternal spring of fadeless fame
Crowns with no mortal flowers.

Rapt though he be from us,
Virgil salutes him, and Theocritus;
Catullus, mightiest-brained Lucretius, each
Greets him, their brother, on the Stygian beach;
Proudly a gaunt right hand doth Dante reach;
Milton and Wordsworth bid him welcome home;
Bright Keats to touch his raiment doth beseech;
Coleridge, his locks aspersed with fairy foam,
Calm Spenser, Chaucer suave,
His equal friendship crave:
And godlike spirits hail him guest, in speech
Of Athens, Florence, Weimar, Stratford, Rome.

What needs his laurel our ephemeral tears,
To save from visitation of decay?
Not in this temporal sunlight, now, that bay
Blooms, nor to perishable mundane ears
Sings he with lips of transitory clay;
For he hath joined the chorus of his peers
In habitations of the perfect day:
His earthly notes a heavenly audience hears,

And more melodious are henceforth the spheres,
Enriched with music stol'n from earth away.

He hath returned to regions whence he came,
Him doth the spirit divine
Of universal loveliness reclaim.
All nature is his shrine.
Seek him henceforward in the wind and sea,
In earth's and air's emotion or repose,
In every star's august serenity,
And in the rapture of the flaming rose.
There seek him if ye would not seek in vain,
There, in the rhythm and music of the Whole;
Yea, and for ever in the human soul
Made stronger and more beauteous by his strain.

For lo! creation's self is one great choir,
And what is nature's order but the rhyme
Whereto the worlds keep time,
And all things move with all things from their prime?
Who shall expound the mystery of the lyre?
In far retreats of elemental mind
Obscurely comes and goes
The imperative breath of song, that as the wind
Is trackless, and oblivious whence it blows.

Demand of lillies wherefore they are white,
Extort her crimson secret from the rose,
But ask not of the Muse that she disclose
The meaning of the riddle of her might:
Somewhat of all things sealed and recondite,
Save the enigma of herself, she knows.
The master could not tell, with all his lore,
Wherefore he sang, or whence the mandate sped:
Ev'n as the linnet sings, so I, he said;—
Ah, rather as the imperial nightingale,
That held in trance the ancient Attic shore,
And charms the ages with the notes that o'er

All woodland chants immortally prevail!
And now, from our vain plaudits greatly fled,
He with diviner silence dwells instead,
And on no earthly sea with transient roar,
Unto no earthly airs, he trims his sail,
But far beyond our vision and our hail
Is heard for ever and is seen no more.

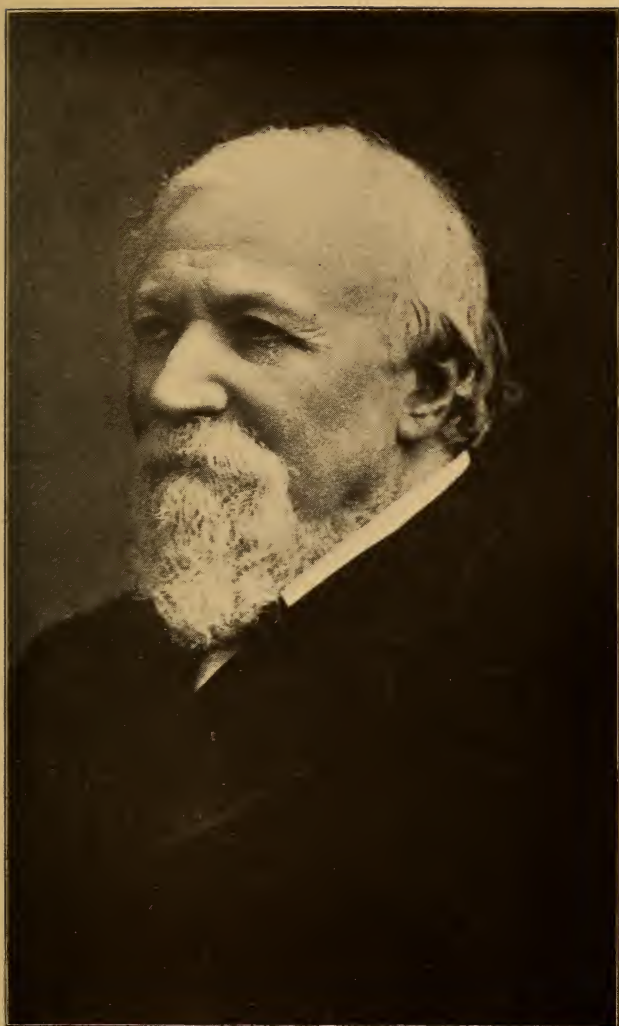
No more, O never now,
Lord of the lofty and the tranquil brow
Whereon nor snows of time
Have fall'n, nor wintry rime,
Shall men behold thee, sage and mage sublime.
Once, in his youth obscure,
The maker of this verse, which shall endure
By splendour of its theme that cannot die,
Beheld thee eye to eye,
And touched through thee the hand
Of every hero of thy race divine,
Ev'n to the sire of all the laurelled line,
The sightless wanderer on the Ionian strand,
With soul as healthful as the poignant brine,
Wide as his skies and radiant as his seas,
Starry from haunts of his Familiars nine,
Glorious Maeonides.
Yea, I beheld thee, and behold thee yet:
Thou hast forgotten, but can I forget?
The accents of thy pure and sovereign tongue,
Are they not ever goldenly impressed
On memory's palimpsest?
I see the wizard locks like night that hung,
I tread the floor thy hallowing feet have trod;
I see the hands a nation's lyre that strung,
The eyes that looked through life and gazed on God.

The seasons change, the winds they shift and veer;
The grass of yesteryear
Is dead; the birds depart, the groves decay:

Empires dissolve and peoples disappear:
Song passes not away.
Captains and conquerors leave a little dust,
And kings a dubious legend of their reign;
The swords of Caesars, they are less than rust:
The poet doth remain.
Dead is Augustus, Maro is alive;
And thou, the Mantuan of our age and clime,
Like Virgil shalt thy race and tongue survive,
Bequeathing no less honeyed words to time,
Embalmed in amber of eternal rhyme,
And rich with sweets from every Muse's hive;
While to the measure of the cosmic rune
For purer ears thou shalt thy lyre attune,
And heed no more the hum of idle praise
In that great calm our tumults cannot reach,
Master who crowd'st our immelodious days
With flower of perfect speech.

—WILLIAM WATSON

ROBERT BROWNING
1812-1889



ROBERT BROWNING

ROBERT BROWNING

There is delight in singing, though none hear
Beside the singer; and there is delight
In praising, though the praiser sit alone
And see the prais'd far off him, far above.
Shakespeare is not our poet, but the world's,
Therefore on him no speech! and brief for thee,
Browning! Since Chaucer was alive and hale,
No man hath walk'd along our roads with step
So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue
So varied in discourse. But warmer climes
Give brighter plumage, stronger wing: the breeze
Of Alpine heights thou playest with, borne on
Beyond Sorrento and Amalfi, where
The Siren waits thee, singing song for song.

—WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

ROBERT BROWNING

Gone from us! that strong singer of late days—
Sweet singer should be strong—who, tarrying here,
Chose still rough music for his themes austere,
Hard-headed, aye but tender-hearted lays,
Carefully careless, garden half, half maze.
His thoughts he sang, deep thoughts to thinkers dear,
Now flashing under gleam of smile or tear,
Now veiled in language like a breezy haze
Chance-pierced by sunbeams from the lake it covers.
He sang man's ways—not heights of sage or saint,
Not highways broad, not haunts endeared to lovers;
He sang life's byways, sang its angles quaint,
Its Runic lore inscribed on stave or stone;
Song's short-hand strain—its key oft his alone.

—AUBREY DE VERE

ROBERT BROWNING

Gone from our eyes, a loss for evermore,
Gone to pursue within an ampler sphere
The aims that wing'd thy soaring spirit here!
Gone where she waits thee, who when living bore
A heart, like thine, vein'd with love's purest ore!
Gone to behold with eyes serene and clear
The world, that to thy life was ever near
In gleams, now perfect dawn, of heavenly lore!
Gone from our eyes that noble gracious head,
The quick, keen glance, the welcoming frank smile,
Hush'd, too, the voice with its strong manly ring,
But not the strains in which our souls are fed
With thoughts that life of half its pain beguile,
And hopes of what the great Beyond shall bring!

—SIR THEODORE MARTIN

A SEQUENCE OF SONNETS ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT BROWNING

I

The clearest eyes in all the world they read
With sense more keen and spirit of sight more true
Than burns and thrills in sunrise, when the dew
Flames, and absorbs the glory round it shed,
As they the light of ages quick and dead,
Closed now, forsake us: yet the shaft that slew
Can slay not one of all the works we knew,
Nor death discrown that many-laurelled head.

The works of words whose life seems lightning wrought,
And moulded of unconquerable thought,
And quickened with imperishable flame,
Stand fast and shine and smile, assured that nought
May fade of all their myriad-moulded fame,
Nor England's memory clasp not Browning's name.

II

Death, what hast thou to do with one for whom
Time is not lord, but servant? What least part
Of all the fire that fed his living heart,
Of all the light more keen than sundawn's bloom
That lit and led his spirit, strong as doom
And bright as hope, can aught thy breath may dart
Quench? Nay, thou knowest he knew thee what thou
art,
A shadow born of terror's barren womb,
That brings not forth save shadows. What art thou,
To dream, albeit thou breathe upon his brow,
That power on him is given thee,—that thy breath
Can make him less than love acclaims him now,
And hears all time sound back the word it saith?
What part hast thou then in his glory, Death?

III

A graceless doom it seems that bids us grieve:
Venice and winter, hand in deadly hand,
Have slain the lover of her sunbright strand
And singer of a stormbright Christmas Eve.
A graceless guerdon we that loved receive
For all our love, from that the dearest land
Love worshipped ever. Blithe and soft and bland,
Too fair for storm to scathe or fire to cleave,
Shone on our dreams and memories evermore
The domes, the towers, the mountains and the shore
That gird or guard thee, Venice: cold and black
Seems now the face we loved as he of yore.
We have given thee love—no stint, no stay, no lack:
What gift, what gift is this thou hast given us back?

IV

But he—to him, who knows what gift is thine,
Death? Hardly may we think or hope, when we
Pass likewise thither where to-night is he,

Beyond the irremeable outer seas that shine
And darken round such dreams as half divine
 Some sunlit harbour in that starless sea
 Where gleams no ship to windward or to lee,
To read with him the secret of thy shrine.

There too, as here, may song, delight, and love,
The nightingale, the sea-bird, and the dove,
 Fulfil with joy the splendour of the sky
Till all beneath wax bright as all above:
 But none of all that search the heavens, and try
 The sun, may match the sovereign eagle's eye.

V

Among the wondrous ways of men and time
 He went as one that ever found and sought
 And bore in hand the lamplike spirit of thought
To illume with instance of its fire sublime
The dusk of many a cloudlike age and clime.
 No spirit in shape of light and darkness wrought,
 No faith, no fear, no dream, no rapture, nought
That blooms in wisdom, nought that burns in crime,
No virtue girt and armed and helmed with light,
No love more lovely than the snows are white,
 No serpent sleeping in some dead soul's tomb,
No song-bird singing from some live soul's height,
 But he might hear, interpret, or illume
 With sense invasive as the dawn of doom.

What secret thing of splendour or of shade
 Surmised in all those wandering ways wherein
 Man, led of love and life and death and sin,
Strays, climbs, or cowers, allured, absorbed, afraid,
Might not the strong and sunlike sense invade
 Of that full soul that had for aim to win
 Light, silent over time's dark toil and din,

Life, at whose touch death fades as dead things fade?
 O spirit of man, what mystery moves in thee
 That he might know not of in spirit, and see
 The heart within the heart that seems to strive,
 The life within the life that seems to be,
 And hear, through all thy storms that whirl and drive,
 The living sound of all men's souls alive?

VII

He held no dream worth waking: so he said,
 He who stands now on death's triumphal steep,
 Awakened out of life wherein we sleep
 And dream of what he knows and sees, being dead.
 But never death for him was dark or dread:
 'Look forth' he bade the soul, and fear not. Weep,
 All ye that trust not in his truth, and keep
 Vain memory's vision of a vanished head
 As all that lives of all that once was he
 Save that which lightens from his word: but we,
 Who, seeing the sunset-coloured waters roll,
 Yet know the sun subdued not of the sea,
 Nor weep nor doubt that still the spirit is whole,
 And life and death but shadows of the soul.
 —ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

December 15.

(*From*)

ROBERT BROWNING: CHIEF POET OF THE AGE

O strong-souled singer of high themes and wide—
 Thrice noble in thy work and life alike—
 Thy genius glides upon a sea whose tide
 Heaves with a pain and passion infinite!
 Men's hearts laid bare beneath thy pitying touch;
 Strong words that comfort all o'er-wearied much;

Thoughts whose calm cadence moulds our spirit-life,
Gives strength to bravely bear amid world-strife;
And one large Hope, full orb'd as summer sun,
That souls shall surely meet when LIFE is won!
So round thy heart our grateful thanks entwine;
Men are the better for these songs of thine!
At eve thy muse doth o'er us mellowed swell,
Strong with the strength of life lived long and well.

—WILLIAM G. KINGSLAND

THE BURIAL OF ROBERT BROWNING

Upon St. Michael's Isle
They laid him for awhile
That he might feel the Ocean's full embrace,
And wedded be
To that wide sea—
The subject and the passion of his race.
As Thetis, from some lovely underground
Springing, she girds him round
With lapping sound
And silent space:
Then, on more honor bent,
She sues the firmament,
And bids the hovering, western clouds combine
To spread their sabled amber on her lustrous brine.

It might not be
He should lie free
Forever in the soft light of the sea,
For lo! one came,
Of step more slow than fame,
Stooped over him—we heard her breathe his name—
And, as the light drew back,
Bore him across the track
Of the subservient waves that dare not foil
That veiled, maternal figure of its spoil.

Ah! where will she put by
Her journeying majesty
She hath left the lands of the air and sun;
She will take no rest till her course be run.
Follow her far, follow her fast,
Until at last,
Within a narrow transept led,
Lo! she unwraps her face to pall her dead.

'Tis England who has travelled far,
England who brings
Fresh splendor to her galaxy of Kings.
We kiss her feet, her hands
Where eloquence she stands;
Nor dare to lead
A wailful choir about the poet dumb
Who is become
Part of the glory that her sons would bleed
To save from scar;
Yea, hers in very deed
As Runnymede,
Or Trafalgar.

—MICHAEL FIELD

THE TWELFTH OF DECEMBER

On this day Browning died?
Say, rather: On the tide
That throbs against those glorious palace walls;
That rises-pauses-falls
With melody and myriad-tinted gleams;
On that enchanted tide,
Half real, and half poured from lovely dreams,
A soul of beauty,—a white rhythmic flame,—
Passed singing fourth into the Eternal
Beauty whence it came.

—RICHARD WATSON GILDER



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